The AIFS Foundation and the AYA Program

The Academic Year in America (AYA) program has been in operation since 1981 and is conducted under the auspices of the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation. The Foundation is a 501 © 3 not-for-profit educational organization founded in 1967 with the assistance of the late Robert F. Kennedy.

In addition to sponsoring the AYA program, the AIFS Foundation awards grants to high schools (known as the Tony Cook grant) for projects that encourage intercultural awareness. The Foundation is governed by a board of trustees that includes prominent educators and international business leaders. The board meets regularly to review the effectiveness and quality of the Foundation’s AYA program to ensure adherence to standards of excellence.

The Foundation has been designated by the U.S. Department of State as an Exchange Visitor Program authorized to issue the Form DS 2019 which enables qualified participants to apply for a J-1 exchange visitor visa from the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy.

Our vision is to encourage and inspire young people to become considerate and forward thinking citizens of the world, by creating dynamic educational opportunities to share beliefs, ideologies and values across cultures – and to provide these experiences with an unrivaled commitment to the safety of our students and service to our participants.

Our mission is “we bring the world together”!

The AYA Program

The AYA program has been developed for high school students, ages 15 to 18 from all parts of the world, who wish to spend a semester or full academic year studying in the United States while living with American families. Carefully screened teenagers who have a demonstrated ability in the English language, a solid academic record and positive references, are hosted by American families and attend local high schools. While improving their English, these young people share a cross-cultural exchange with their host families, schools and communities.

The goals of the AYA program are to:
- Encourage Americans to learn more about foreign countries, cultures and languages
- Create opportunities for cross-cultural friendships
- Increase understanding of the United States, its people, culture and history, among young people all over the world
- Provide a solid educational experience for all participants in the program
- Make participants better citizens of their countries through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas
- Continue to offer programs that are superior from both experiential and administrative perspectives

AYA students arrive in August for the 10-month full academic year, for the 5-month fall semester program, or in January for the 5-month spring semester program. Most of our students come for the full academic year, although we do place a smaller number of students for the August and January semesters.
**Special Grant Programs**

AYA is proud to be a grant recipient to administer the prestigious FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) and YES (Youth Exchange and Study) scholarship programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. These programs are identified by both the State Department and by members of Congress as important initiatives in U.S. public diplomacy in helping to promote mutual understanding between U.S. citizens and key foreign policy countries. These scholarship programs are merit-based and highly competitive. The students selected are rigorously screened and identified as potential future leaders in their home communities. While in the U.S., these scholarship students participate in many different activities that enhance their experience, including local community service, International Education Week presentations in schools, and many different leadership and enhancement activities.

**Key Players**

AYA has several key players that make our program successful.

**AYA Organizational Chart**

**Students** from around the world apply to participate in the AYA program.

- They are between the ages of 15 to 18 and have a minimum of three years of English, a grade point average of C+ or better, and a passing score on an English language test.
- Their reasons for joining the program differ but all have a desire to improve their English, curiosity about U.S. culture and customs, and the dream to be a student in an American school.
- Students agree to adhere to the program rules.
- Students are fully insured and have their own spending money.
- Our “core” students come from all over the world:
  - Germany
  - China
  - Brazil
- Spain
- Norway
- Italy
- Hungary
- Chile
- South Korea
- Luxembourg
- Thailand
- Vietnam
- …and more!

- FLEX and YES students come from around the world, including:

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Host families are people of all ages, economic strata and ethnic backgrounds.

- Host families provide the student with a safe and suitable home for the academic year, semester, or welcome period.
- They welcome the student as a member of their family and encourage him/her to participate in all aspects of family life.
- Host families provide the student with their own bed and place to study, either in a room they share with a family member of their own sex and age range, or their own room.
- They provide the student with all meals except lunches purchased at school.
- Host families assist the student with school registration.
- They encourage the exchange of ideas by interacting with the student and exposing the student to the cultural and social environment of the home and neighborhood.
- They provide the love and understanding a young person needs to enjoy a successful academic year in America.
- They are flexible, patient, and open-minded.

Accredited High Schools both private and public, accept our students.

- U.S. high schools embrace AYA students as members of their student bodies.
- Students attend the local public high school serving the districts in which their host families live or a private school in the area.
- Students enroll in full course loads and can participate in most activities such as band, sports, etc., as long as the school approves their participation in such activities.
- School administrators determine a grade placement for students.
- Students must maintain a C+ in all classes.
Local Coordinators are the community representatives of the AYA program. They are volunteers who share a belief in the value of cross-cultural exchange. Local Coordinators are responsible for:

- Finding volunteer host families: networking, in-person promotion of the program, marketing initiatives, and more.
- Screening, interviewing and selecting safe and suitable host families.
- Enrolling students in local public or private high schools.
- Providing host families with a pre-arrival orientation.
- Supervising and counseling families and students during the year.
- Contacting students and host families monthly.
- Making sure students are safe throughout the program.
- Informing the National Office of any and all concerns and issues.
- Providing monthly student reports to AYA through your LC Portal.
- Answering questions and providing emergency assistance.
- Relocating students locally to other homes if necessary.
- Taking a student into his or her own home in the event of an emergency.
- Performing Second Visits
- Performing LC In-home Interviews

Regional Directors work full time in our national office. They are responsible for:

- Administering the program in their specific regions, and overseeing the placement process within their territories.
- Supervising Local Coordinators and communicating with overseas partners.
- Supporting Local Coordinators with student disciplinary issues.

Overseas Partners are responsible for the initial selection and screening of our students.

- Partners interview students and administer English placement exams and submit student applications.
- Partners provide a pre-departure orientation and serve as liaisons to each student’s natural parents during the program year.

Rules and Regulations

This section will focus on the Department of State federal regulations that are mandatory for the program and help ensure the safety of our students and the CSIET (Council on Standards for International Education Travel) standards. These federal regulations and standards enable us to offer exchange opportunities for students around the world while providing a safe environment.

The Department of State regulates exchange student programs. The Department of State has designated AYA to issue visas that allow exchange students to live and study in the U.S. for a semester or school year.

CSIET, established in 1984, is a not-for-profit organization that oversees and helps ensure that all organizations maintain a high quality international educational travel and exchange experience for participants. CSIET establishes standards for organizations operating exchange programs at the high school
level, monitors compliance with those standards, and disseminates information. AYA is proud to be a CSIET certified program.

AYA has established our own program rules and guidelines to reflect the policies of the Department of State and CSIET. This section provides all of the guidelines mentioned above. It is important as a Local Coordinator to understand each of the federal regulations and guidelines prior to placing a student. Please share any questions you may have with your Regional Director.
Reprint from the Code of Federal Regulations

U.S. Department of State Program Regulations for All High School Exchange Programs:

Washington, D.C. 20547
Criteria for Exchange Teenager Program sec. 22 CFR 62.25 Secondary school students

PART 62—EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

1. The Authority citation for part 62 is revised to read as follows:


2. Section 62.25 is revised to read as follows:

§ 62.25 Secondary school students.

(a) Purpose. This section governs Department of State designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign secondary school students are afforded the opportunity to study in the United States at accredited public or private secondary schools for an academic semester or an academic year, while living with American host families or residing at accredited U.S. boarding schools.

(b) Program sponsor eligibility. Eligibility for designation as a secondary school student exchange visitor program sponsor is limited to organizations:

(1) With tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and

(2) Which are United States citizens as such term is defined in § 62.2.

(c) Program eligibility. Secondary school student exchange visitor programs designated by the Department of State must:

(1) Require all exchange students to be enrolled and participating in a full course of study at an accredited academic institution;

(2) Allow entry of exchange students for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) and not more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and

(3) Ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled. In all cases, sponsors must notify both the host family and school prior to the exchange student’s arrival in the United States whether the placement is for an academic semester, an academic year, or a calendar year.

(d) Program administration. Sponsors must ensure that all organizational officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf:

(1) Are adequately trained. Sponsors must administer training for local coordinators that specifically includes, at a minimum, instruction in: Conflict resolution; procedures for handling and reporting emergency situations; awareness or knowledge of child safety standards; information on sexual conduct codes; procedures for handling and reporting students’ allegations of sexual misconduct or any other allegations of abuse or neglect; and the criteria to be used to screen potential host families and exercise good judgment when identifying what constitutes suitable host family placements. In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all local coordinators complete the Department of State mandated training module prior to their appointment as a local coordinator or assumption of duties. The Department of State training module will include instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program; its public diplomacy objectives; and the Secondary School Student category rules and regulations. Sponsors must demonstrate the individual’s successful completion of all initial training requirements and that annual refresher training is also successfully completed.

(2) Are adequately supervised. Sponsors must create and implement organization-specific standard operating procedures for the supervision of local coordinators designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/agents/volunteers. They must also have sufficient internal controls to ensure that such employees/agents/volunteers comply with such standard operating procedures.

(3) Have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice’s National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(4) Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;

(5) Make no exchange student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of the local coordinator authorized to act on the sponsor’s behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from that exchange student’s participation in the Exchange Visitor Program;

(6) Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;

(7) Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and email;

(8) Make certain that the exchange student’s government issued documents (i.e., passports, Forms DS–2019) are not removed from his/her possession;

(9) Conduct the host family orientation after the host family has been fully vetted and accepted;

(10) Refrain, without exception, from acting as:

(i) Both a host family and a local coordinator or area supervisor for an exchange student;

(ii) A host family for one sponsor and a local coordinator for another sponsor; or

(iii) A local coordinator for any exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student’s teacher or principal. This requirement is not applicable to a boarding school placement.

(11) Maintain at a minimum a monthly schedule of personal contact with the exchange student. The first monthly contact between the local coordinator and the exchange student must be in person. All other contacts may take place in-person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(12) That a sponsor representative other than the local coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family visit the exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student’s placement in the home.

(13) Maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the host family. At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester, and (i.e., twice during the academic year) the contact by the local coordinator with the host family must be in person. All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring the issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(14) That host schools are provided contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department’s Office of Designation; and

(15) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.

(e) Student selection. In addition to satisfying the requirements of § 62.10(a), sponsors must ensure that all participants in a designated secondary school student exchange visitor program:
(1) Are secondary school students in their home countries who have not completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary study, exclusive of kindergarten; or are at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years and six months of age as of the program start date;
(2) Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and
(3) Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status.

(f) Student enrollment. (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:
(i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student will attend; and
(ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.

(2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.

(3) Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS–2019.

(4) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances for a minimum of three years and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.

(5) Sponsors must provide the school with a translated "written English language summary" of the exchange student's complete academic course work prior to commencement of school, in addition to any additional documents the school may require. Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.

(6) Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students from the sponsor.

(7) Upon issuance of a Form DS–2019 to a prospective participant, the sponsor accepts full responsibility for securing a school and host family placement for the student, except in cases of voluntary student withdrawal or visa denial.

(g) Student orientation. In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at § 62.10, all sponsors must provide exchange students, prior to their departure from their home countries, with the following information:

(1) A summary of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations governing student participation in the exchange visitor program along with a detailed summary of travel arrangements;
(2) A copy of the Department's welcome letter to exchange students;
(3) Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation;
(4) A detailed profile of the host family with whom the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary arrival family;
(5) A detailed profile of the school and community in which the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the student will pay tuition; and
(6) An identification card, that lists the exchange student's name, United States host family placement address and telephone numbers (landline and cellular), sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers, name and telephone numbers (landline and cellular) of the local coordinator and area representative, the telephone number of Department's Office of Designation, and the Secondary School Student program toll free emergency telephone number. The identification card must also contain the name of the health insurance provider and policy number. Such cards must be corrected, reprinted, and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student's placement.

(h) Student extra-curricular activities. Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is:

(1) Authorized by the local school district in which the student is enrolled; and
(2) Authorized by the state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility, if applicable. Sponsors shall not knowingly be party to a placement (inclusive of direct placements) based on athletic abilities, whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party.

(3) Any placement in which either the student or the sending organization in the foreign country is party to an arrangement with any other party, including receiving school personnel, whereby the student will attend a particular school or live with a particular host family must be reported to the particular school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

(i) Student employment. Exchange students may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

(j) Host family application and selection. Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

(1) Provide potential host families with a detailed summary of the Exchange Visitor Program and of their requirements, obligations and commitment to host;
(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, "Information to be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications". The form must include a statement stating that: "The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities." Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

(3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home where the student will be living.

(4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary; that the exchange student's bedroom contains a separate bed for the student that is neither convertible nor inflatable in nature; and that the student has adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency. An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same sex.

(5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (i.e., field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;

(6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing;

(7) Verify that each member of the host family household 18 years of age and older, as well as any new adult member added to the household, or any member of the host family household who will turn eighteen years of age during the exchange student's stay in that household, has undergone a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);
(8) Maintain a record of all documentation on a student’s exchange program, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years following program completion; and

(9) Ensure that a potential single adult host parent without a child in the home undergoes a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant. Such secondary review should include demonstrated evidence of the individual’s friends or family who can provide an additional support network for the exchange student and evidence of the individual’s ties to his/her community. Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student’s placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

(k) **Host family orientation.** In addition to the orientation requirements set forth in § 62.10, sponsors must:

1. Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor’s exchange visitor program, including examples of “best practices” developed by the exchange community;
2. Provide all selected host families with a copy of the Department’s letter of appreciation to host families;
3. Provide all selected host families with a copy of Department of Statepromulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations;
4. Advise all selected host families of strategies for cross-cultural interaction and conduct workshops to familiarize host families with cultural differences and practices; and
5. Advise host families of their responsibility to inform the sponsor of any and all material changes in the status of the host family or student, including, but not limited to, changes in address, finances, employment and criminal arrests.

(l) **Host family placement.** (1) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student’s departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:

i. Facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a host family placement has not been secured;

ii. Place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the host family, the natural parents, and the students being placed. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with a host family, or in the home of a local coordinator, regional coordinator, or volunteer. Sponsors may not place students from the same countries or with the same native languages in a single home.

(2) Prior to the student’s departure from his or her home country, sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or arrival placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances that necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor must document the reasons(s) necessitating such change and provide the Department of State with an annual statistical summary reflecting the number and reason(s) for such change in host family placement in the program’s annual report.

(m) **Advertising and Marketing for the recruitment of host families.** In addition to the requirements set forth in § 62.9 in advertising and promoting for host family recruiting, sponsors must:

1. Utilize only promotional materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor’s purposes, activities, and sponsorships;
2. Not publicize the need for host families via any public media with announcements, notices, advertisements, etc. that are not sufficiently in advance of the exchange student’s arrival, appeal to public pity or guilt, imply in any way that an exchange student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately, or identify photos of individual exchange students and include an appeal for an immediate family;
3. Not promote or recruit for their programs in any way that compromises the privacy, safety or security of participants, families, or schools. Specifically, sponsors shall not include personal student data or contact information (including addresses, phone numbers or email addresses) or photographs of the student on Web sites or in other promotional materials; and
4. Ensure that access to exchange student photographs and personally identifying information, either online or in print form, is only made available to potential host families who have been fully vetted and selected for program participation. Such information, if available online, must also be password protected.

(n) **Reporting requirements.** Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at § 62.15, sponsors must file with the Department of State the following information:

1. Sponsors must immediately report to the Department any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or any other allegations of abuse or neglect of an exchange student. Sponsors must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation. Failure to report such incidents to the Department and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the suspension and revocation of the sponsor’s Exchange Visitor Program designation;

2. A report of all final academic year and semester program participant placements by August 31 for the upcoming academic year or January 15 for the Spring semester and calendar year. The report must be in the format directed by the Department and must include at a minimum, the exchange student’s full name, Form DS–2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placement (current U.S. address), school (site of activity) address, the local coordinator’s name and zip code, and other information the Department may request; and

3. A report of all situations which resulted in the placement of an exchange student with more than one host family or in more than one school. The report must be in a format directed by the Department and include, at a minimum, the exchange student’s full name, Form DS–019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placements (current U.S. address), schools (site of activity address), the reason for the change in placement, and the date of the move. This report is due by July 31 for the previous academic school year.

A new Appendix F is added to Part 62, as follows:

**Appendix F to Part 62—Information To Be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications**

**Basic Family Information:**

a. Host Family Member—Full name and relationship (children and adults) either living full-time or part-time in the home or who frequently stay at the home
b. Date of Birth (DOB) of all family members
c. Street Address
d. Contact information (telephone; e-mail address) of host parents
e. Employment—employer name, job title, and point of contact for each working resident of the home
f. Is the residence the site of a functioning business? (e.g., daycare, farm)
g. Description of each household member (e.g., level of education, profession, interests, community involvement, and relevant behavioral or other characteristics of such household members that could affect the successful integration of the exchange visitor into the household)
h. Has any member of your household ever been charged with any crime? Household Pets:

a. Number of Pets
b. Type of Pets

**Financial Resources:**

a. Average Annual Income Range: Less than $25,000; $25,000–$35,000; $35,000–$45,000; $45,000–$55,000; $55,000–$65,000; $65,000–$75,000; and $75,000 and above. Note: The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of ensuring that the basic needs of the exchange students can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.”
b. Describe if anyone residing in the home

...
receives any kind of public assistance (financial needs-based government subsidies for food or housing)

c. Identify those personal expenses expected to be covered by the student Diet:
   a. Does anyone in the family follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe
   b. Do you expect the student to follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe
   c. Would you feel comfortable hosting a student who follows a particular dietary restriction (e.g., Vegetarian, Vegan, etc.)? (Y/N)
   d. Would the family provide three (3) square meals daily?

High School Information:
   a. Name and address of school (private or public school)
   b. Name, address, e-mail and telephone number of school official
   c. Approximate size of the school student body
   d. Approximate distance between the school and your home
   e. Approximate start date of the school year
   f. How will the exchange student get to the school (e.g., bus, carpool, walk)?
   g. Would the family provide special transportation for extracurricular activities after school or in the evenings, if required?

h. Which, if any, of your family’s children, presently attend the school in which the exchange visitor is enrolled?

If applicable list sports/clubs/activities, if any, your child ren(s) participate(s) in at the school
i. Does any member of your household work for the high school in a coaching/teaching or administrative capacity?

j. Has any member of your household had contact with a coach regarding the hosting of an exchange student with particular athletic ability?

If yes, please describe the contact and sport.

Community Information:
   a. In what type of community do you live (e.g.: Urban, Suburban, Rural, Farm)
   b. Population of community
   c. Nearest Major City (Distance and population)
   d. Nearest Airport (Distance)
   e. City or town website
   f. Briefly describe your neighborhood and community
   g. What points of interest are near your area (parks, museums, historical sites)?
   h. Areas in or near neighborhood to be avoided?

Home Description:
   a. Describe your type of home (e.g., single family home, condominium, duplex, apartment, mobile home) and include photographs of the host family home’s exterior and grounds, kitchen, student’s bedroom, student’s bathroom, and family and living areas.
   b. Describe Primary Rooms and Bedrooms
   c. Number of Bathrooms
   d. Will the exchange student share a bedroom? (Y/N) If yes, with which household resident?
   e. Describe the student’s bedroom
   f. Describe amenities to which the student has access
   g. Utilities

Family Activities:
   a. Language spoken at home
   b. Please describe activities and/or sports each family member participates in: (e.g., camping, hiking, dance, crafts, debate, drama, art, music, reading, soccer, baseball, horseback riding)
   c. Describe your expectations regarding the responsibilities and behavior of the student while in your home (e.g., homework, household chores, curfew (school night and weekend), access to refrigerator and food, drinking of alcoholic beverages, driving, smoking, computer/Internet/E-Mail)

Would you be willing voluntarily to inform the exchange visitor in advance of any religious affiliations of household members? (Y/N)

Would any member of the household have difficulty hosting a student whose religious beliefs were different from their own? (Y/N)

Note: A host family may want the exchange visitor to attend one or more religious services or programs with the family. The exchange visitor cannot be required to do so, but may decide to experience this facet of U.S. culture at his or her discretion.

How did you learn about being a host family?

References:

Dated: October 21, 2010

Sally J. Lawrence,
Director, Office of Designation, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

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U.S. Immigration Regulations and Procedures

As detailed in the Department of State’s regulations, “…the United States Teenager-Visitor Program is designed to give teenage students from other countries an opportunity to spend from six months to one year studying at a high school or other educational institution in the United States. Under this program, a foreign student is placed by the Exchange-Visitor sponsor (in our case the AIFS Foundation’s AYA program) with a United States family which serves as the host family for the duration of the visit. The primary purpose of this program is to improve the foreign student’s knowledge of American culture and language through active participation in family, school and community life. A secondary purpose is to improve American knowledge of a foreign culture.”

When an international student has been matched with a host family and he/she has been accepted for admission to a U.S. school, the student may then be issued a visa to enter the United States. For students enrolled in the Academic Year in America (AYA) program, the AIFS Foundation issues a DS 2019 form. The DS 2019 form enables the student to obtain a J-1 exchange visitor visa from the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy in his or her native country so that he/she may enter the U.S. and participate in the AYA program.

A U.S. visa is a stamp placed by a U.S. consular officer on a page of a valid passport. It indicates that the consular officer has determined that the holder is qualified to apply for admission to the United States in a particular immigration classification.

The AIFS Foundation assumes full responsibility for all students participating in the AYA program.

AYA Student Rules

AYA has developed a set of rules for the students to follow while on the program. The student and their natural family sign a copy of these rules prior to student arrival as part of their application verifying that they understand and will abide by the program rules. These rules help set appropriate expectations for the student and their natural family. This information can also be found in the AYA Student Handbook, which is located on the Resources page of your LC Portal.

Failure to abide by the following rules may result in dismissal from the program and termination of the student’s visa:

- Students must abide by all U.S. laws.
- It is against the law in the United States for high school students to buy or drink alcohol. This law applies to all AYA students as well. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.
- The use of drugs for non-medical reasons by AYA students under any circumstances is strictly forbidden. Examples of non-medical (illegal) drugs are cocaine, LSD, and marijuana.
- AYA students are not permitted to hitchhike.
- AYA students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms under any circumstances.
- AYA students are not permitted to hold part-time jobs; the J-1 visa does not allow it. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation. If students would like to earn spending money during their stay, they are permitted to hold small jobs (no more than 10 hours per week) such as baby-sitting and grass-cutting.
Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it and it is permissible in the host state.

Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes or while on the AYA program.

The AYA program is an academic program. If a student is expelled from school for any reason, it is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

Students must attend school daily unless sick and under a doctor’s care or with special permission from host parents. Students must complete all homework and assignments.

Students must carry a full course load and maintain a “C+” average or better in all classes. Students must also enroll in an appropriate English language or literature course, American Studies (history, government, or civics course, a Math course, and a Science course.

Students are not permitted to visit such places as pornographic shops, adult theaters, drinking establishments, or any websites related to pornography.

Students must respect and abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and voluntarily help with household chores.

Students are not permitted to talk about the host family’s private affairs with others.

Students cannot change families and schools without mediation or due process. Students are not to change host families within the first 30 days of the program. Students cannot move from the host family home without permission of the Local Coordinator.

Students are allowed to travel only if accompanied by a responsible adult (21 years of age or older), and if: a.) their AYA Regional Director has received an Independent Travel Form signed by their natural parents; b.) their host family approves; and c.) the trip does not involve missing any school. The exception is a school-sponsored trip. Students must notify their Local Coordinator of all travel plans at least one week prior to the trip. Students may not return to their homeland for holidays or for any reason other than an extreme emergency.

Students must show respect for their Local Coordinators and obey their instruction.

Students must not participate in any sexual contact or sexual activity that is culturally inappropriate in the U.S., including (but not limited to) contact with minors or with any members of the host family household.

Athletic eligibility or participation is not guaranteed. It is dependent on the local and national rules and school policies.

High school graduation diplomas are not guaranteed. They are dependent on local and national rules, and school policies.

All students must have insurance coverage through AYA or coverage through their overseas partner.

Students cannot have participated in an academic year or semester or secondary school student exchange program in the United States, or attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status before joining the AYA program.

Parents and friends may not visit the student during the program and may not disturb the host family life. If relatives and friends would like to visit, they must wait until the end of the program.

No student may enter into any contractual agreement, be it business, marital, or religious, while on the program.
Additional AYA Program Guidelines:

- The student must always be aware of his/her responsibility as an exchange student and make a determined effort to be successful in his/her school, host family, and host community.
- The student should limit contact with other exchange students during the program and make all necessary efforts to have contact with U.S. citizens.
- On special occasions (holidays, birthdays, etc.), the student’s priority must be to spend this time with the host family.
- The student should limit international phone calls and emails to parents or friends and must only use pre-paid calling cards for phone calls or their own personal cell phones or computer.
- It is the student’s responsibility to know and abide by the rules outlined here, for his/her safety and well-being. AYA expects the student to cooperate with these rules and encourages the student to ask the host family, Local Coordinator, or AYA directly to explain any rules he/she does not understand.
- Termination from the AYA Program: Any student who fails to comply with the AYA rules, the host family rules, or local, state, and federal laws may be terminated from the AYA program and sent home. All costs for any expenses involved in this case will be the student’s responsibility, and no refund of program fees will be issued.

AYA Student Code of Conduct:

AYA expects students to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that positively reflects the goals of the AYA program, their home countries and most importantly, themselves. As an exchange student, they are an ambassador of their country and as such it is important that they consider how their behaviors, attitudes and interactions will reflect upon their home country and culture. They are also a reflection of the AYA program, and AYA expects them to represent the program well and behave in a way that honors the integrity of the program and our mission to bring the world together.

Objective of Student Code of Conduct:

- The purpose of the student code of conduct is to establish a consistent set of expectations for student behavior on the AYA program. AYA’s goal is to ensure that each of our students has a safe and rewarding experience while maintaining a nurturing community wherein the rights and dignity of all individuals are valued and respected. The student code of conduct is the foundation of the AYA disciplinary process and serves to support the program rules.

Standards of Personal Integrity and Honesty

The following behaviors violate AYA’s standards of personal integrity and honesty:

- Misrepresenting personal circumstances or deliberately issuing false statements, in order to change host families or obtain any outcome that is favorable to the student is considered a serious infraction of the student code of conduct. Student safety is paramount to AYA and the program encourages students to report any and all circumstances that have the potential to compromise a student’s health, safety or overall well-being. AYA takes any allegations of impropriety, misconduct or unsuitable housing arrangements seriously and will take swift and appropriate action to ensure that the student is safe and investigate the claims accordingly. AYA values the safety, health and dignity of all of our participants,
representatives and volunteers and students must be aware that issuing false claims or statements about any person or circumstance associated with the placement has the potential to permanently damage the reputation of an individual, family or community and is considered a serious breach of ethics. If a student is found to have deliberately issued any false statements or deliberately misrepresented their circumstances for any reason, he or she will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification.

- Intentionally furnishing, misrepresenting or omitting information on the student application. AYA student applications must be completed accurately and honestly in order for AYA program staff to make an informed decision about a student’s eligibility to participate on the program.
- Any academic act of deception that is intentionally done to gain an unfair advantage for the student or another individual. This includes, but is not limited to giving or receiving assistance in an academic assignment/exam; plagiarizing or paraphrasing without appropriate citation and intentionally taking credit for the work of others.

**Standards of Safety and Dignity**

The following behaviors undermine AYA’s objective to respect and protect the safety, health and dignity of all individuals:

- Intentionally or recklessly endangering the student’s own health, safety or welfare or that of any individual. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  
  a) Possession of any object classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, firearms, bludgeon weapons, brass knuckles, explosives, etc.).
  b) Operating a motor vehicle without a license or outside of AYA program rules.
  c) Driving with a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
  d) Driving with a person who is showing irresponsible behavior (i.e. cell phone use, texting, speeding, racing, etc.).
  e) Consuming and/or sharing drugs or alcohol, including abuse of over the counter drugs/drugs/supplements and drugs that are prescribed but being used for recreational purposes.

- Disorderly Conduct: Any behavior that is intended to be disruptive, threatening, lewd or indecent. This includes the intentional or reckless destruction or damage of personal property (i.e. vandalism, tire slashing, damaging pranks).

- Demonstrating a lack of sound judgment and maturity by engaging in behavior that could compromise the student’s own safety and wellbeing. For example:
  
  a) Getting into a car with a stranger;
  b) Leaving the home or school without permission and/or knowledge of your surroundings
  c) Knowingly going to places where illegal activity could be present (i.e., parties or a friend’s house; concerts, after-prom parties, etc.)

- Irresponsible use of social media/communication outlets:
a) Engaging in sexually explicit conversations via social media or other digital communications.
b) Sharing sexually explicit or violent images or videos.
c) Posting or sharing photos that may be sexually suggestive
d) Posting or sharing content that disparages or deems any individual, race, religion or sexual orientation.
e) Putting up content that could compromise the trust, privacy or character of the student’s host family or any other member of the community.

○ Harassment: AYA defines harassment as any instance or repeated instances of conduct which annoys, threatens or causes an individual to fear for his or her safety. AYA will not tolerate any behavior that is intended to threaten, disparage or offend an individual. Examples of harassing behavior include but are not limited to:

    a) Uninvited comments about any individual’s appearance.
    b) Unwanted touching, gestures or comments of a sexual nature including, verbal, non-verbal and written communication.
    c) Derogatory comments intended to disparage or demean an individual based on sex, religion, race, ethnicity, physical or mental challenges, or sexual orientation.
    d) Physical assault of any kind.