Your Role as a Local Coordinator

You provide the vital link between the AYA national office and your community and our AYA participating schools, host families and students. You are the person in the community to whom our exchange students, host families and schools turn. You are the “community expert” on the AYA team.

As the AYA Local Coordinator in your community, you are responsible for providing information and support to all program participants, as well as for promoting international understanding and cross-cultural awareness. AYA looks to you to be an informed professional representative in your community.

We require that you know AYA policies and guidelines so that you are able to create a climate in which schools, host families and participating schools feel comfortable and are enthusiastic about the AYA exchange experience. The AIFS Foundation has established program procedures and guidelines in order to ensure that a quality program is consistently offered worldwide to all participants, these are based in part on the DOS guidelines for exchange.

Local Coordinators cannot supervise a student placed in his or her own home or a student placed with a Local Coordinator’s family member (i.e. parents, siblings, etc.). Students you host or placed with relatives must be assigned a Supervising Local Coordinator other than yourself.

You are directly responsible to your Regional Director in the national office. Regional Directors communicate with their Local Coordinators on a weekly basis regarding the program’s operation and students’ progress in their areas. Your Regional Director will keep you up-to-date and provide you with the support, guidance, materials and further training you need.

Position and Responsibilities

AYA Local Coordinators share a deep belief in the value of cross-cultural exchange. They enjoy working with students and are key to the success of the AYA program. Every one of the responsibilities listed below is an important function of the Local Coordinator position:

- Serving as spokesperson for intercultural exchange and actively marketing the AYA program in his or her community.
- Establishing relationships with administrators from accredited high schools and understanding each school’s policy on foreign exchange students.
- Identifying, screening and selecting families who are appropriate host families for AYA students.
- Making at least two placements (of an AYA student in a host family and school) per calendar year.
- Conducting orientations for host families prior to the arrival of students, meeting students at the airport and introducing them to their host families.
- Conducting orientations for students who elect to travel directly to their host community.
• Providing support and supervision for students and host families throughout the AYA program year or semester.

• Meeting, in person, with each student and host family once a month separately to discuss personal and private issues or concerns; Submit completed Student Report Forms to the national office every other month (September, November, January, March and May).

• Providing emergency assistance if necessary and inform the AYA national office immediately of any urgent situations.

• When moving a student is necessary, finding a host family replacement for the student is his/her host community or close surrounding area.

**Introducing Yourself as an AYA Local Coordinator to the Community**

The Foundation is pleased that you have decided to become a part of our organization by accepting the Local Coordinator position. We would like to let your community know that you are the Academic Year in America (AYA) representative in your area. AYA will send to your local newspaper a press release announcing your appointment as a Local Coordinator.

**Volunteering as a Local Coordinator**

Being a Local Coordinator for AYA is a great opportunity to serve as a volunteer for our country. By volunteering through a national non-profit organization, you will be respected for the leadership position that you’ve accepted. You will make a significant contribution to your community by broadening the cultural awareness of those around you.

**Compensation**

Compensation for your work as a volunteer Local Coordinator is intended to reimburse you for any out-of-pocket expenses associated with placing and supervising our students. This compensation should not be considered supplemental income. In order to receive compensation, your contract, host family application, and host family interview must be updated annually. Placement and supervision stipend is paid when all paperwork has been received on time by the Regional Director. *(Please keep a copy of all materials you submit to AYA.)*

*Note: Late or incomplete Host Family Applications and or Student Reports can result in reduced compensation or no compensation at all. Failure to produce these documents on a timely basis may result in a loss of compensation or termination as a Local Coordinator.*
Cancellations

 Occasionally students and host families must cancel their participation in the AYA program before the academic year even begins. AYA handles these situations as follows:

If a student cancels, the AYA office informs the Local Coordinator as soon as news of the cancellation is received. When provided, reasons for cancellation are given, which the Local Coordinator may pass on to the host family. If possible, the Local Coordinator should urge the family to review other applications and consider choosing another student. Even if the family does not take another student, the Local Coordinator will still be paid the placement fee for locating and screening the family, provided that all placement paperwork had been received in the national office at the time of the cancellation.

If a host family cancels, the Local Coordinator should contact the Regional Director immediately to notify the AYA office of the cancellation. AYA immediately notifies our overseas partner that another family must be found for that student. It is expected that the Local Coordinator will be able to locate another family, since the student is already anticipating coming to this area. The student’s name reappears on the weekly list of available students. No placement fee, credit towards National Meeting, or incentives will be paid or Bonus Points rewarded to the Local Coordinator when the host family cancels.

Local Coordinator Incentives

The AYA Annual National Meeting

In addition to the above-described compensation, AYA holds a National Meeting each year in exciting international locations. Local Coordinators who place a set number of students by a set date (refer to the Local Coordinator Contract) are invited to attend the National Meeting as guests of AYA. National Meetings typically last three to four days and include training and the opportunity to socialize with colleagues from across the U.S., as well as with AYA’s overseas partners. Airfare, hotel accommodations and some meals are included. Destinations have included Costa Rica (2002), Barcelona, Spain (2003), Dublin, Ireland (2004), Quito, Ecuador (2005) Munich, Germany (2006) and Athens, Greece (2007).

Bonus Point Program

Local Coordinators are automatically enrolled into AYA’s Early Placement Bonus Point program upon making their first placement. You can earn Bonus Points based upon early placements, and redeem your points for domestic or international travel, office equipment (e.g. computers, digital cameras, etc.) or other merchandise. Please refer to our Bonus Point Booklet for more information about this program, and to your Local Coordinator Contract for the current Bonus Point schedule.

Go Fish

Some Local Coordinators learned about the Local Coordinator position through classified newspaper advertising. Most Local Coordinators, however, were referred to the AYA program by another Local Coordinator, a friend, or by hosting an exchange student or hearing about the program through one of our participating schools.

Each year through our “Go Fishing” campaign, we encourage our Local Coordinators to refer their friends, relatives or anyone else they feel may enjoy the responsibilities associated with being a Local Coordinator. Local Coordinators are compensated for every new Local Coordinator they recruit and train and
who makes a placement which is not in his/her own home. Payment is made to the Local Coordinator trainer after the paperwork for the new recruit’s first placement is received in the AYA office. The decision to hire a Local Coordinator’s referral is made after the candidate’s application is received and reviewed by the national office. Please refer to your Local Coordinator contract for further details.

Mentor Program

The AYA office will assign an interested, experienced Local Coordinator to mentor a new Local Coordinator. The mentor will be compensated for each mentee he/she trains, and who makes a placement outside his/her own home. Payment is made to the Local Coordinator when all the required paperwork is on file in the national office.

Multiple Placement Bonus

The multiple placement bonus is awarded to Local Coordinators who place at least five students per school year. The amount the Local Coordinator receives is determined by the years of service with AYA.

Activities and Fun Stuff

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a Local Coordinator is planning activities and events for your students and host families. Coordinating activities where all host families and students are invited provide both groups with a support network. Host families can use these meeting times to collaborate with other host families about questions or concerns they may have. For students, they can lean on other students who may be experiencing the same feelings as they are. As a Local Coordinator, it gives you an opportunity to learn more about your students and their cultures while sharing a new life experience with them. It is easy to see how these activities provide hours of fun while benefiting all who are involved.

Helpful hints to get started:

- Think ahead and plan early
  - Check school calendars and major holidays
- Never be afraid to ask for help
  - Host families like to be included
- Don’t overextend yourself
  - Set your personal limits
- Maximize your resources
  - Rely on community volunteers and local financial support
- Set a budget for time and money
  - Be aware of expenses and time constraints
- Be creative; think outside the box
  - Organize fundraisers; dream big
- Reap your benefits
  - Include local media and politicians to gain recognition
Suggestions

- Ask your host families to sign up at the host family orientation to host a party or event.
- Here are a few group activities that have been popular over the years: welcome pool party, Halloween carnival, international holiday dinner, and farewell ceremony. Your host families may want to work together to host one of these events.
- Many Local Coordinators suggest that, if possible, a “students only” retreat weekend or overnight trip in the middle of the year is a fantastic idea. It gives the host families some downtime, and students a chance to reflect on the first half of their experience and look forward to making the most of their remaining time.
- Help to reduce students’ cost by planning fundraisers. Have a group of host parents sign up at orientation to coordinate fundraisers, throughout the year.
- Ask local businesses to give a discount for your group. Ask about a non-profit discount, or explain that you have exchange students who are new to America.

Things to Do

Local trips may include tours of TV and radio stations, police headquarters, fire departments, corporate offices, museums, City Hall or the state Capitol with the opportunity to meet a public official.

Sports events are always popular with students. A professional, college, or high school football, soccer, basketball or baseball game is always fun.

What makes your area special? Do you have mountains, beaches, lakes, amusement parks, famous landmarks or beautiful parks? Let’s say Chicago for example: Chicago has the Navy Pier, Wrigley field, a great aquarium, several art museums and a planetarium. You can stroll down the Magnificent Mile or ride to the top of the Sears Tower for a wonderful view of the city. Just walk around the city and take note of the excellent and diverse architecture. Chicago also has universities and colleges, plus symphonies and theaters.

Small activities may include going to:

- Community Theaters
- Movies
- Bowling
- School activities
- Skating Rinks
- Festivals, etc.

Bigger activities may include:

- Spending a day on a ropes course
- Camping at a national park or on the beach
• A sleepover at a zoo or aquarium
• A weekend at a major amusement park
• A ski retreat
• A big city tour
• A trip to the nation’s capitol and White House

America is filled with historical landmarks, gorgeous landscapes and many interesting things to see and do. Giving your students a chance to visit these interesting places that they will remember for a lifetime is most rewarding for a Local Coordinator. Some of these activities may seem impossible but with a little hard work and a lot of patience they are very do-able. To make these dreams come true fund-raising may be necessary. Fund-raising may be challenging if not organized well. Prepare in advance for possible issues that may occur. Recruit your host families to assist you with your fund-raising efforts.

Fund-raising Ideas

• Car washes in frequently traveled areas – malls, restaurants, and theaters
• Garage sales – location, location, location
• Wait tables for tips – ask local restaurants for support
• Sell cookie dough – did someone say cookies?
• Host international fair – team up with local colleges
• Host a movie night – use churches or recreation facilities
• Sell dinners – Bar-B-Que, pancakes or spaghetti
• Do yard work – churches or local businesses
• Sell raffle tickets – check state and local ordinances
• Ask local businesses for donations – create sponsorships

Note: Just a weekend at the Local Coordinator’s home can also be fun and exciting for the students. They have a chance to be with others like themselves and get to know you better. You can plan leadership and or communication activities or just eat pizza and watch classic American movies. You’ll be surprised how much you will gain from this. Your host families may appreciate the break and use this time as a chance to regroup.
Community Service

Another great activity to do with your students is volunteer for community service projects. Not only do your students have fun doing it, but they learn a valuable lesson. To many students, volunteering is a new concept. This is a great opportunity to show your students one of the things that makes America great. Helping others by giving of your time is something anyone can do regardless of their age, race, or economic status. It feels good and shows how even one person can make a big difference!

Volunteer Ideas

- Food Banks
- Homeless Shelters
- Battered Women Shelters
- Pet Adoptions
- Litter Pick Up
- Tutoring

Nationally Recognized Volunteer Opportunities

- Habitat for Humanity
- United Way
- Salvation Army
- Adopt a Highway
- Boys and Girls Club
- YMCA