Your Role as a Local Coordinator

You, the Local Coordinator, provide the vital link between the AYA national office, your community, and our AYA participating students, host families, and schools. You are the “community expert” on the AYA team responsible for providing information and support to all program participants as well as promoting international understanding and cross-cultural awareness. AYA looks to you to be an informed, professional representative in your community.

AYA has established program procedures and guidelines in order to ensure that a quality program is consistently offered worldwide to all participants. These are based on the Department of State federal regulations for youth exchange visitors. We require that you know AYA policies and guidelines as well as the Department of State’s federal regulations so that you are able to implement a quality program in your community in which schools, host families and participating schools are comfortable with and enthusiastic about the AYA exchange experience.

Position and Responsibilities

Being a Local Coordinator for AYA is a great opportunity to serve as a volunteer for our country. By volunteering through this 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.

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. All of the responsibilities described below are important functions of the Local Coordinator position. Please be sure to read your Local Coordinator Contract in full and contact an AYA National Office team member if you have questions on any of the following information or the information contained in the Contract.

**Host Family Recruitment:** One of your primary responsibilities as a Local Coordinator is to identify, screen and select safe and suitable host families throughout the year. This responsibility is vital to the success of the AYA program. We have devoted an entire section of this guide to successfully marketing the program by reaching out to well-networked individuals in your own networks and new, active ones in your local area. We encourage you to take advantage of the AYA website, marketing materials (the website where you can order these materials can be found in your LC Portal), and other information we can provide at no cost to succeed in matching students with families and schools.

Host family recruitment is an active, ongoing, year-round process. Once you find a potential host family, you will assist AYA in the screening process by conducting an interview in the host family home with all household members present. You will conduct a minimum of 2 reference checks provided by the family, neither of which may be an AYA employee or representative, host family, relative, or employed by any member of the household. You will ensure that the host family completes an online Host Family Application and a Background Check Release form, and will ensure that these forms are submitted promptly to the AYA National Office. You will ensure that all placement paperwork is received by the AYA National Office within 2 weeks of the family's student selection, or before arrival in the host family home for host family changes. Please keep an electronic or paper copy of all information you submit to AYA, with the following exceptions: any copies of the
Background Check Release Form or Host Family financial information in your possession must be properly destroyed.

**High School Enrollment:** As you begin networking in your area, we strongly encourage you to meet with local high school administrators, counselors and other school personnel and brief them on the AYA program while developing individual relationships. You must also get information about enrollment deadlines, policies, and procedures for foreign exchange student enrollment. For each student you place with a host family, you will obtain a High School Enrollment form signed and dated by a school administrator. You will also provide the high school administrator a copy of the placed student’s full AYA application (which can be obtained by the AYA office) and maintain a record of the date when this information was given to the school. In addition, you will obtain a written statement from the school in the event the school agrees to **accept 5 or more students in a school year.**

**Host Family Approval and Student Contact Process:**

1. Potential host families may register online at the AYA website (www.academicyear.org) to receive a unique username and password. This allows them to view student profiles which include the following information: student’s first name, gender, age, home country, and program length (semester or full year); personal interests and hobbies; and whether or not they can adjust to pets. You will stay in contact with your Regional Director to inform him/her of the host family’s top choices and to put a student on hold, if the family so chooses.

2. Using the same log-in, the family completes their host family application and submits the required photos, along with the Background Check Release form.

3. You will conduct an in-home, in-person Host Family Interview (the Interview form can be found in your LC Portal) with all members of the family present and check two non-relative references; submit these to AYA compliance for review.

4. Once approved, the host family’s online registration is updated to allow them to view a photo (headshot) of each student. Please be in close communication with the Compliance team regarding the approval status of all potential Host Families.

5. Once the high school enrollment form and all other required paperwork is in order, the student is informed of his/her match and receives basic information about the host family, school, and you as the Local Coordinator.

6. You and the host family will receive an email confirming the match has been approved. After 24 hours, the host family may begin contacting their student! Please do not allow the family to communicate with the student prior to notification from Compliance.

It is against Department of State regulations for a family who has not been screened and approved to host by the AYA national office to receive the contact information of any student. You must ensure that students’ personal information (last name, photo, address, phone, email or other contact details) is not given to any family and that students are not contacted directly by any family, schools, or Local Coordinators until the placement has been completely approved by the national office and the student has been informed of the placement.

**Double Placement:** Should a family elect to host two students, you may place two exchange students with one host family. The two students must be from different countries and cannot speak the same native language. This is known as a double placement and requires that you provide the written Double Placement Agreement (found in your LC Portal) signed by the Host Family. You are required to notify AYA if a host family will be hosting one AYA student plus one student from another organization,
and you must provide the same double placement paperwork. (AYA will collect signed agreements from the students and natural parents.) Only after all paperwork has been received will the double placement be allowed per U.S. Department of State regulations. Under no circumstances may the Local Coordinator place more than 2 AYA students in any one host family home, including their own.

**Single Placement:** Students may be placed with a single person. This is one person living in a home without children. Single placements require more comprehensive screening and students must be presented with a complete profile of the individual before they will agree or decline to accept to the placement. A Single Placement Review Form will also need to be completed by you. This form can also be found in your LC Portal.

Requirements for a single placement:

- The Local Coordinator must reside no more than 60 miles of the single person’s home.
- The individual must demonstrate strong ties to the community and have the resources to provide an additional support network for the student throughout the year.
- Local Coordinators must conduct enhanced monthly monitoring of single placements, including in-person monthly visits. Phone calls and emails will not substitute for any monthly contacts with students placed with a single person.
- AYA Compliance will review each single person placement with a committee after all the paperwork has been completed and reviewed.
- Students must be presented, in writing, with a profile of the placement – the student will then have the opportunity to accept or reject the presentation.
- If a student agrees to accept a single person presentation, AYA must receive a single person agreement signed by both the student and his or her natural parents, prior to the student’s arrival to the U.S.
- A single person is encouraged to host two students whenever possible.
- Single males may not host female exchange students.

**Preparing for the Exchange Experience**

**Host Family Orientation:** You will provide an AYA Host Family Orientation for each family prior to their student’s arrival. *The orientation must be conducted each year a family hosts with us, even if the host mother or father is a Local Coordinator with AYA.* The orientation and interview may not be done on the same day: the orientation must only be conducted after the family has been fully approved by the AYA National Office. Orientation content is provided by AYA for your use through your LC Portal.

**Student Arrival:** AYA will contact both you and the host family with your student’s arrival date and flight itinerary via email. When each student arrives at your area airport, we ask that you make every effort to be present. If this is not possible, you must contact the Host Family and confirm they will meet their student(s) at the airport as scheduled.

**Student Orientation:** Many AYA students elect to attend the 4-day AYA arrival orientation in the New York metro area where they participate in workshops and activities before flying on to their host communities. You will conduct the AYA Student Orientation for each student you place who does not attend the group orientation and instead flies directly to your host community. Orientation should be completed, and the form must be submitted to the Compliance team, within two (2) weeks of the
student’s arrival. Orientation content is provided by AYA for your use. We strongly encourage you to invite those students who attended the group orientation to participate in your own local orientation.

**Safeguarding Your Student**

You are required to protect and safeguard your student to the best of your ability. The following AYA policies and DOS regulations have been developed to assist you in this.

**Student Access to Communication Methods:** As you communicate with each host family prior to and after a student’s arrival, you will ensure that each student is permitted reasonable access to his/her cellular phone, and/or computer, and/or phone or Internet within the home. If you or a host parent limits a student’s phone or computer access due to a disciplinary concern, you must ensure that the student may always have access to a cellular or landline phone in case of emergency.

**Student Access to Documents:** You are never permitted to remove or permit removal of a student’s passport or other government-issued documents from the student’s possession.

**Emergencies:** You must inform the AYA National Office immediately of any student emergency that arises. AYA’s toll-free number (800 322-4678) is available 24/7 in case of emergency. If you come to believe, or a student reports that he/she is unsafe in a host family home, you must immediately report the situation to AYA and **immediately** remove the student from the home. Likewise, if any allegation of abuse, neglect or threat to the student’s safety is reported to the AYA National Office, you will be responsible for removing the student from the home/situation **immediately** at the request of AYA. You must inform AYA of the student’s emergency placement, which may **only** be in your home or in the home of another host family that is already approved to host with AYA for the current program year. If you or another AYA approved host family are already hosting a student of the same nationality or spoken language, you should make alternate arrangements with your emergency back-up host family or another AYA-approved host family when possible. In cases where this is not possible, you must bring the student to your own home immediately until a more suitable arrangement can be made. **Removing a student immediately from a potentially unsafe situation is AYA’s utmost priority in emergency situations.**

**45-Day Home Visit (Second Visit):** An AYA representative other than the Local Coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family must visit each exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student’s placement in the home. AYA asks that you agree to facilitate such visits for students outside your area where possible, and to observe all forthcoming information from the AYA national office regarding these visits. It is the Local Coordinators responsibility to check his/her portal regularly to confirm Second Visits/ Follow Up requests and complete the reports for confirmed visits on or before the deadline indicated, as required by the Dept. of State.

- **Follow-Up Visits:** All welcome placements must be visited within the first thirty (30) days following the student’s arrival in the home, and every subsequent thirty (30) days after the initial visit was made, providing that the given student(s) is/are still in the same home.
- **Second Visits:** All regular semester and full year placements must be visited within forty-five (45) days following the student(s) arrival in the home.
Supervising Your Student and Host Family

Frequent in-person contact with your student is the most effective way in which you can monitor your student’s placement and keep your student(s) safe. You are the face of the AYA program, and your student’s primary advocate within your community. Building a trusting relationship through meaningful regular contact will encourage openness and communication which will help you keep your students safe throughout their experience. There is no substitution for your personal involvement in their experience; they must know and believe that you are an active part of their year abroad and will be there to support and guide them through difficult times.

You will provide counseling, support, supervision, and mediation for students and families throughout the year and, in cooperation with the Regional Director, will resolve any problems that develop with supervised students. You are responsible for all supervision for your student(s) until their departure.

First Contact with Your Students: You must contact the student within the first 3 days of their arrival, and you must visit the student in-person within the first two weeks of their arrival, and must be separate from the required contact in the first month.

Contact with Students: You must contact each student under your supervision at least once every month. AYA requires that each subsequent monthly contact also be a separate, in-person meeting; however, if an in-person contact is impossible in a given month, a phone call documented email, or video chat may substitute to a maximum of every other month. It is important to get information about all aspects of the student's experience when you contact him/her, such as: adjustment, relationships, life with their Host Family, friends, emotions, health, etc.

Contact with Host Families: You must contact each Host Family monthly. An in-person visit is not required, but encouraged. After the initial Host Family Interview, you will visit each family in their home at least once per semester to confirm it continues to be a suitable host home. This does not include the required home visit within 45 days of student arrival, since it must be conducted by someone other than you as the family and student's Local Coordinator.

Supervision Reports: You will be responsible for submitting an online monthly report to the AYA national office documenting your monthly contact with each student and host family. Each report must be submitted by the end of the calendar month, or payments will be withheld.

Host Family Change: When a student move is deemed necessary or appropriate by the AYA National Office, you are required to find a replacement Host Family for the student in your area. Prior to the student's move, you will communicate with the Regional Director and submit complete placement paperwork to the AYA office. You will inform the high school of the Host Family Change by obtaining a new signed High School Enrollment Form within 5 days of the student move, even if the student is staying in the same high school.

Out of Town Coverage: When you travel away from the community for 5 days or more, including any AYA sponsored travel such as the National Meeting, you must notify AYA in writing (an email will suffice) and arrange for supervision coverage by an AYA-approved Host Parent or community member age 25 or older. If AYA has not previously approved the individual in that program year, he/she must submit a Background Check Release Form with name and contact information at least
one week prior to the coverage period. If you will be absent for 30 days or more, another Local Coordinator (designated by the National Office) must complete the monthly supervision report and will receive payment for that report.

**Important Notes and Restrictions**

**Host Family Recruitment:** Families or individuals who receive needs-based subsidies may not become host families. You may not knowingly be party to a placement (including a pre-placement) based on athletic ability, whether initiated by a student, host family, school, or any other interested party. You may not make monetary payments or other incentives to host families. Advertisements may never appeal to public guilt or pity. Families or individuals who have not met the full federal vetting requirements may not view photos of prospective exchange students. Photographs or personal information of actual, prospective or available students are prohibited in hosting advertisements for the purposes of ensuring privacy and student safety.

**Other Organization:** If you partner as a coordinator with more than one exchange student organization, you are not permitted to host an AYA student and must provide a fully screened emergency back-up host family for your AYA students, and you must inform us of the existence of this partnership on your annual Contract, or in writing as soon as the partnership is made with another organization.

**Conflict of Interest:** You cannot supervise a student placed in your own home, a student placed with an employee/employer, a family member (i.e. parents, siblings, etc.), or those students over whom you have a position of trust or authority (such as a teacher, guidance counselor or principal). You are required to disclose your occupation on the Local Coordinator contract and to notify AYA as soon as possible when there is a conflict of interest. Students you host, place with employees/employers or relatives, or over whom you have authority in another capacity must be assigned a Supervising Local Coordinator other than yourself. AYA will work with you to identify another Supervising Local Coordinator in your area. AYA highly recommends that you do not supervise a student in the home of either an individual or family with whom you are very close.

**Marketing:** Marketing to find host families is an important aspect of the Local Coordinator role but it is important to keep in mind the Department of State Regulations that pertain to any and all Marketing efforts put forth by AYA or yourself (section 62.25, n, 1-4):

- Utilize only promotional materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor’s purposes, activities, and sponsorship;
- 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;
- 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
- 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.

AYA encourages all Local Coordinators to order marketing materials. You can do so through your LC Portal. Once you login, visit the Marketing page under Resources, and fill out a request for free, colorful, and helpful materials as many times as you need.

**Training Program:** All coordinators must complete the Training Program as outlined in the Welcome Letter before acting as an official representative of AYA, and before performing any and all Local Coordinator duties. Our goal is to ensure you are fully educated on as well as comfortable with all aspects of your required duties. All returning Local Coordinators must complete the Department of State certification and annual refresher training by the deadline provided by AYA.

**Compensation**

Compensation for your work as an independent contractor Local Coordinator is intended to reimburse you for any out-of-pocket expenses associated with placing and supervising our students. In order to receive compensation, the annual Department of State Certification, your Contract, Host Family Application, and trainings must be updated annually. Your Background Check form must be submitted annually as well. Placement and supervision stipends are paid when all paperwork has been received on time and reviewed by the AYA Compliance and Field Staff departments.

*Note: Late or incomplete Local coordinator vetting paperwork, trainings, 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.*

**Local Coordinator Incentives**

**The AYA Annual National Meeting**

In addition to the compensation described above, 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 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 and network with AYA’s headquarter staff, fellow Local Coordinators from across the U.S., as well as with AYA’s overseas partners. Airfare, hotel accommodations, and most meals are included. Destinations have included Quito, Ecuador (2005) Munich, Germany (2006), Athens, Greece (2007), Cancun, Mexico (2008), Buenos Aires, Argentina (2009), Prague, Czech Republic (2010), Florence, Italy (2011), and Panama (2012), Portugal (2013), Brazil (2014), and Vienna (2015).
The AYA Extension Trip

After the AYA National Meeting, AYA offers a 3-day bonus trip that begins on the last day of the Annual Meeting. Extension trips are an exciting opportunity to see more of the country or even another neighboring country! Local Coordinators are eligible to qualify for the extension trip by placing a certain number of students within a certain timeframe. The extension trip is announced after the first National Meeting qualifying date and details on how to qualify will be issued to you by the AYA National Office!

Bonus Point Program

You are automatically enrolled into AYA’s Early Placement Bonus Point program upon making your first placement. You can earn Bonus Points based upon early placements, and fast submission of paperwork and redeem your points for domestic or international travel, office equipment (e.g. computers, digital cameras, etc.) or other merchandise. Please refer to the Resources section of your LC Portal for more information.

AYA Referral Program

AYA encourages active Local Coordinators to recruit new Local Coordinators they feel would be excellent candidates. You will be paid $50 for each new vetted and trained Local Coordinator you recruit. You will receive $300 for the first placement your recruited Local Coordinator makes outside of his or her home. You will then receive an additional $50 for each student placed by the new Local Coordinator outside of his/her home (up to five students) by August 1. All referral incentives are awarded in October for fall students placed, and in February for January students placed. The decision to vet a recruit is at the sole discretion of the AYA National Office.

Referral Incentive Cap: maximum of 5 per year.

Local Coordinator Code of Conduct

As a representative of AYA you are expected to conduct yourself at all times in a manner which positively reflects the objectives and values of the AYA mission, and the roles and responsibilities set forth in your Contract. You also agree to:

1. Abide by and comply with all program and governmental regulations. It is AYA’s responsibility to provide training on all regulations, however, it is your responsibility to actively participate in all trainings and understand all program and federal requirements. You must know enough to determine when to seek advice from supervisors, management and appropriate AYA personnel.

2. At all times, you must be focused on the safety and welfare of your AYA students. It is your responsibility to actively monitor each of your students in compliance with program and federal regulations, and immediately report and act on any conditions or allegations that have compromised or have the potential to negatively impact a student’s overall health or well-being; this includes but is not limited to poor living conditions, health concerns, emotional duress and/or allegations of physical, sexual abuse, or neglect.

3. Conduct yourself professionally and cordially with all AYA staff and program participants, including but not limited to high school personnel, host families, students and other AYA representatives, including with all written and verbal communication and documentation.

4. You must wear and display your Local Coordinator identification badge at all times when performing all duties that are required by the AYA National Office.
5. Consult with your Regional Director or appropriate National Office staff when sharing information regarding program policy via email, internet or social media.

6. Local Coordinators using our marketing materials to promote the AYA program must not alter our promotional materials in any way. Use of the AYA logo must have prior approval from the AYA Office.

7. The Local Coordinator agrees that all AYA literature, papers and information are the property of AYA and must be returned immediately upon expiration or termination of the Contract. Such information includes, but is not limited to, names of other Local Coordinators, overseas partners, host families, Local Coordinator identification badges, and the LC Resource Guide. The Local Coordinator further agrees not to divulge such information to anyone or to use such information in any way outside the regular course of performance of this Contract on behalf of AYA.

8. Issue no false or deliberately misleading statements or advertisement concerning the AYA program to the media, the public or any other persons affiliated with the program. This includes information transmitted via email and social networking sites.

9. As an independent contractor with AYA, any and all social media accounts and websites must professionally reflect the goals and standards of AYA. We recommend that all Local Coordinators create separate social media accounts, and these accounts must abide by all AYA Social Media Guidelines.

10. Contact the AYA National Office prior to conducting any live interviews with the media.

11. Refrain from and report any behavior that may bring the AYA program notoriety or disrepute.

12. Take personal accountability for recognizing and reporting any breaches of conduct or program or federal regulations.

13. Serve all program participants of the AYA program impartially, including AYA students, host families and staff persons.

14. During the term of this Contract the Local Coordinator, as an independent contractor, is free to accept any and all other employment, so long as such employment does not detract measurably from the ability to perform this agreement and does not involve the abuse or misuse of AYA’s confidential information or proprietary materials and does not otherwise raise a reasonable question as to the suitability of the Local Coordinator to work with teenagers or constitute a clear conflict of interest. The Local Coordinator further agrees to disclose to AYA any other employment relationship as might affect the Local Coordinator’s ability to perform this agreement.

15. If criminal charges are brought against the Local Coordinator, the Local Coordinator must notify AYA immediately.

16. The Local Coordinator is required to check their LC Portal on a regular basis to view required tasks such as Supervision Reports, Second Visits, training modules, and other pertinent pieces of information.

**Your Role at the High School**

When it comes to working with high schools, you are AYA’s most valuable asset. You are the person responsible for obtaining permission for enrollment from each high school that you wish to enroll an AYA student in, along with gathering information such as enrollment policies and procedures. If you present yourself as reliable, professional, and committed, this will mean more to the schools than any paperwork the National Office can provide. The more dedicated you are to the student, the program, and the school,
the more successful you will be in placing students and maintaining a relationship with your high schools. This section will help you to develop strong, positive, and lasting relationships with your high schools.

**Schools Are Our Partners**

All AYA students must attend accredited secondary schools. High schools across the United States realize the many benefits of international student exchange and are usually willing to enroll international students. Schools are valuable partners in the exchange experience. Their willingness to welcome our students into their classrooms and to allow them to join teams and participate in extracurricular activities makes the AYA program possible.

In turn, AYA students make important contributions to their school communities:

- Students bring a world view to history and government classes, sharing with their American peers a new way of perceiving the United States' position in the world
- Students share customs, lifestyles and attitudes of people from different parts of the globe
- Students bring “the real thing” to foreign language classes

**Getting to Know Your High Schools**

As a Local Coordinator, you will call to make an appointment to meet your local high school administrators (often a principal, guidance counselor, or an administrator at the district office). When meeting the high school official in person, introduce yourself as an AYA Local Coordinator and present him/her with the *High School Administrator’s Guide*, which is a marketing material you can order through your LC Portal. Find out the number of exchange student spaces available for AYA exchange students within your local school district, the school’s deadline for enrolling students and any relevant policies regarding exchange students. Discuss the high school benefits available to participating high schools listed later in this chapter.

**Contacting School Administrators**

While recruiting host families, you should begin to learn the answers to the following questions with regards to your local high schools:

- Is the school accredited? *If school is not accredited, AYA students cannot attend per Department of State regulations.*
- What is the policy of the local school regarding foreign exchange students?
- What is the deadline for enrollment?
- What is the number of students that you will be permitted to enroll in each local school?
- How do you get answers to the above questions?

Start with the high school principal: Call the high school principal in schools in your own district, neighboring towns, neighboring districts, and even neighboring counties. Make appointments to introduce yourself as the AYA program representative to these schools. Also, the principal can provide you and AYA with official school policies regarding exchange students.

The principals may refer you to another appropriate person within the school, such as the assistant principal, school superintendent, foreign language teacher, guidance counselor, etc. However, your first contact with
a school should be through the principal. Contacting high school principals first shows respect for them and school administration.

Many AYA Local Coordinators find that it is beneficial to develop a good relationship with the principal’s secretary/assistant. Frequently, the secretary is the person in the school who will be able to assist and direct you to the school’s many resources.

Making Your Appointment with the Principal

Getting through the door is half the battle!

In your role as an AYA Local Coordinator, visiting high school principals, administrators, and other school personnel is important. You are the AYA program representative in your community, so your image, your words, and actions are important. The school is going to look to you for support and for answers to questions that will arise, should an AYA student (or students) be enrolled there.

Prepare yourself for your meeting with the principal or other school official. Review this manual and the High School Administrator’s Guide, carefully, prior to your appointment. Bring school-specific materials with you for your meeting (such as the High School Advantage and the High School Administrator’s Guide, both you can order through your LC Portal) and when you are finished reviewing them with the school official, give them to the school. During your meeting, you should review the materials with school personnel to familiarize them with our programs, policies and the benefits of working with the AYA program. Remember to dress appropriately to make a professional impression at the school. Please make sure to wear your badge!

Please remember that you have a whole team of professionals at the AYA National Office to support you, so if you are asked a question which you can’t answer, simply say, “I can’t answer that question right now, but I will get back to you shortly.”

During your first interaction with a school, try to gauge the school’s general attitude toward exchange programs and international students. The following questions are helpful to use as a guide:

- What are your thoughts about exchange student programs and international students in general?
- How many students are enrolled at the school?
- How many international students will the school accept?
- Is there a deadline for placing students in the school?
- Does the school enroll international students in all grade levels or are there restrictions?
- What courses does the high school require of all students?
- What other exchange programs have students in the school?
- What do you like about the program? What do you dislike?
- Is there an International Club? Who is president? The president of the international club can be a resource for foreign exchange students and may be able to assist with functions such as international dinners. This is a great way to get the community involved with the AYA program.
- Is there a school newspaper? Who is the editor? Featuring foreign exchange students in newspaper articles brings attention to the students and AYA program, which creates awareness and promotes international exchange.
- Which school official can sign a High School Enrollment Form?
- Does the school accept semester students in August? January?
• Does the school allow exchange students to participate in graduation ceremonies and or obtain a diploma? *Note: Graduation participation is not required, just an inquiry.*

Working with the AYA program gives high schools many advantages. The advantages that appeal to most administrators are detailed below. Please refer to the *High School Administrator's Guide* for more advantages.

**Benefits of Enrolling an AYA Student in Your School**

**Tony Cook Memorial Grant**

Every year, the AIFS Foundation awards grants to assist schools in developing programs that increase international understanding. These grants are in memory of Tony Cook, a former Trustee of the AIFS Foundation. For almost 30 years, Tony Cook served his country as a career officer in the United States Information Agency and dedicated his life to the ideals of fostering international understanding.

The Tony Cook Memorial Grant provides each selected high school with a $1,000 grant. All AYA participating schools are invited to submit an application outlining a program or project of international dimension. Projects have included the purchase of foreign language tapes, sponsorship of a cultural event during Foreign Language Week, and the purchase of international flags. Through the Tony Cook Memorial Grant Program, the AIFS Foundation hopes to demonstrate its dedication to the highest ideals in international education. Schools submit proposals between February and April and awards are announced in May.

**Intercultural learning in your classroom**

Hosting exchange students allows intercultural learning to come alive in classrooms. New perspectives are added to discussions that had previously been limited to American teachers and students trying to imagine beyond their own cultural biases and experiences. Classroom discussions shaped by different cultural perspectives and experiences are often richer and more engaging. They prepare students for multi-cultural life events that may occur in their future. American students in language classes have an added benefit when native speakers contribute to linguistic and cultural background information.

**Exposure to diversity**

Recent studies have shown that American and exchange students grow in their understanding and appreciation of diversity when friendships develop during hosting experiences. This understanding will lead to an increase in tolerance.

**A tangible connection to world events**

World events take on a new significance when we have personal relationships with people from the places in the news. This new significance is just the beginning of bridging the gaps of intercultural differences. Exchange students are a group of brave, young people who are eager to share their cultural knowledge with your teachers and students. However, they have come to the United States to learn about our culture, our people, and our language. These students share a desire to be academically successful in America and will strive to be at the top of the American classes. Records indicate that hosting exchange students can and usually does improve the scholastic scores of a school. In addition, federal funds are often provided to schools that host exchange students.
Annual scholarship eligibility

All participating high schools are eligible to receive an annual scholarship from AYA, which can be awarded to a worthy American student from the school community. One of the advantages of enrolling an AYA student in your school is the access to the AIFS family of programs. AIFS offers a world of college study abroad opportunities open to American students. In addition, AIFS’s sister organization, the American Council for International Studies (ACIS), offers short-term travel programs for students, teachers, and adults. The scholarship can be used toward the following AIFS programs:

- Summer Institute for the Gifted
- AIFS College Study Abroad Programs

A globalized campus

AYA students allow intercultural learning to come alive. Classroom discussions are richer and more engaging when shaped by different cultural perspectives. Language classes benefit when native speakers contribute linguistic and cultural knowledge. World events take on new significance when personal relationships influence opinions.

Enrollment Procedures

Once a high school has agreed to enroll an AYA student, the Local Coordinator must have the High School Enrollment form completed and submitted to AYA. Please note:

**AYA Student Placements are not official until the High School Enrollment forms have been completed.** You must have a signed High School Enrollment form for each student you place **before** the placement is confirmed. The student will not be notified of their placement until the enrollment form is received by AYA and all the placement documents are submitted and approved.

Please complete the High School Enrollment form very carefully and have the school official responsible for accepting students sign it. Give a copy to the school office for their records and keep a copy for yourself. Send a copy to AYA Compliance at 203-724-1536 or at ayacompliance@aifs.org

*If a school will allow you to enroll more than five exchange students, they must submit a request in writing to AYA to fulfill Department of State regulations. Contact your Regional Director for a sample letter for the school to use.*

Keep Your Schools Informed

As soon as you’ve matched your student with a family, you should give a copy of the student’s full application to your school contact immediately. This will enable the high school contact to become more familiar with the new student and to consider class placement and course selection. AYA will also send you a copy of each student’s application. Should your student move during the course of their program, you must complete and submit a Host Family Change Form to your Regional Director. You must also complete a new High School Enrollment form with the new family information to keep the school’s records updated. You should keep a copy for yourself and give a copy to the school.
School Fees and Other Expenses

Students are informed that all costs related to transcripts and procedures which may enable them to earn credit for their studies in the U.S. are their responsibility. Program participants bring money for expenses (including school lunches, books, uniforms, lockers, etc.) and are expected to be financially independent.

Course Selection

Registration of the student and course selection can take place either as soon as the student arrives or on the first day of school, depending on the school's policy. If a host parent is not able to accompany the student, you should be available. You may like to be on hand in any case, as it’s an important day.

All AYA students MUST enroll in at least four academic subjects, including:

- An appropriate English language or literature course. *Students are discouraged from taking ESL classes as they should be enrolled in a regular grade level English class*
- An American studies (history) or government course
- Math
- Science

Courses should be selected with the following considerations in mind:

- English competency (additional English courses may be helpful)
- A student’s interests
- Graduation requirements if applicable
- For Brazilian, Italian and Spanish students, Ministry of Education requirements, which the students should have (see convalidation section below)
- The high school’s specific requirements

Grade Assignment and Graduation

AYA does not guarantee grade assignment, a receipt of a diploma, or participation in graduation ceremonies to any of its students. Students, host families, or Local Coordinators should not pressure a school to place an AYA student in a particular grade or to allow them to graduate. Students can be issued a warning or be placed on probation if they continually ask school personnel to allow them to graduate.

Convalidation

Most students enrolled in the Academic Year in America (AYA) program do not receive credit in their home country for the courses taken while in the United States. However, a few educational systems allow students to receive credit for their year or semester of study in the U.S. (convalidation). Most students from Brazil, Italy and Spain, in particular, have this opportunity.

Convalidation is not the responsibility of the Local Coordinator. However, these students may need assistance in choosing the appropriate courses in order to receive credit for their studies in the U.S. The Ministry of Education issues guidelines for grade placement and course selection, which AYA students must closely follow. AYA must provide these students with schools that offer at least four of their required
courses, with titles acceptable to the Ministry of Education in their country. The Local Coordinator placing one of these students should provide assistance to students to ensure these guidelines are met when enrolling the student in a high school.

Students from these countries should have a handbook explaining the Ministry’s requirements regarding course selection. These students go through an informative orientation in their home country before coming to the U.S regarding convalidation.

Questions about convalidation should be directed to your Regional Director.