



Exchanges

HOST FAMILY GUIDE

for

PARENTS

Host families are considered one of the most important components of the EXPERIENCES CANADA Exchanges program. To welcome a youth participant into your home and into your family life is a very generous gesture. EXPERIENCES CANADA thanks you for accepting to be a host family.

Please remember that you are welcome to seek support in your role as a host family and that your main responsibility is to provide a safe and enjoyable experience to your guest.

MANDATORY POLICE CHECK

All volunteers and adults 18 years of age and older who are living in the host family household are required to provide clear police record and vulnerable sector checks. The police record checks are in addition to the existing screening processes.

BEFORE YOUR EXCHANGE STUDENT ARRIVES

Before the exchange begins, it is a good idea to write or call the youth participant you will be hosting and his or her family. Sending pictures, a video of your home and family, or Skyping is a good way to describe your living situation, family members and their interests. Making contact ahead of time will help to alleviate some of the shyness or discomfort your visitor may feel. It will also make their family more comfortable letting their child travel away from home.

YOUR HOME

Show your visitor around your home: kitchen, bathroom, his or her bedroom. Establish any ground rules you may have about the use of the telephone, bathroom facilities, tidying up, etc. Explain your family customs concerning chores and if they will be expected to help. If you live on a farm, tour the operation and explain all of the dangers with machinery, livestock, etc.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Sharing a room with the host brother or sister is fine however they must be of the same gender as the visitor. The visitor must also have his or her own bed and a place, such as drawers, shelves or closet space, to put their personal belongings.

FOOD

As a host, it is your responsibility to provide all meals for your visitor. If you do not have set meal times, explain this to your visitor. Please be aware that not all participants may be experienced in preparing their own meals - find out the comfort level of the participant in this regard. If your own children are allowed to help themselves to snacks, encourage your visitor to do likewise. Please be aware of any food allergies or intolerances of your visitor.

ACTIVITIES

Do not arrange for your visitor to be on the road all of the time. Remember that he or she is on an educational exchange visit, not a holiday sightseeing tour. Living as a member of the family will mean a great deal to him or her and the visitor expects to be part of your way of life.

SUPERVISION IN THE HOME

EXPERIENCES CANADA's policy is that adult supervision in the home is mandatory. Youth should not be left alone during the day. If both parents are working or are not available during the day, there should be another adult home. There must be adult supervision in the evening.

MONEY - Who Pays for What?

Consider your visitor as a family member. All meals are to be provided by the host family, even when eating out. If you go out as a family, you should pay for admission fees, tickets, etc. as you would for your own children. However, if your visitor goes out with the group or with others (e.g. to a movie or other kind of entertainment), he or she should pay his or her own way.

SPENDING MONEY

Youth participants will bring some spending money with them. They will probably bring a combination of cash or a debit card. Make sure they do not carry around all of their money. Give them a safe place in your home where they can leave it. They can also leave other valuables in that safe place.

FAMILY TRIPS

If you are planning a family trip away from the home, please notify your Group Organizer. It is important that the participant be reachable in case of an emergency. Please note that EXPERIENCES CANADA does not allow travel outside of the country during the exchange. All activities with the host group and host family must take place in Canada.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Any activities that your visitor wishes to undertake outside your home should only be permitted with your consent and in the company of a member of your family. Please note that EXPERIENCES CANADA does not allow alterations from the program, including visiting friends or relatives, as modifications distract from the objectives of the program.

SAFETY

Follow the same safety precautions with your visiting guest that you would with your own child. It is important that host families, chaperones and anyone assisting in activities take every normal precaution to prevent mishaps from occurring.

MEDICAL ISSUES

Your Group Organizer will provide you with any relevant medical information and treatment for the youth participant you will be hosting. This should outline medical history, current conditions you should be aware of, medication currently being taken and emergency phone number for the participant's parents or legal guardian. If your visitor becomes ill or has an accident, do not hesitate to seek medical attention. Take them to a clinic or hospital for treatment and call your Group Organizer immediately. Please keep the following phone numbers close at hand for quick reference:

- Group Organizer
- Parent/Guardian of participant
- EXPERIENCES CANADA during business hours : 1-800-387-3832
- EXPERIENCES CANADA 24-hour emergency # : 1-888-737-2410

In the event of an incident or accident, the Group Organizer needs to inform EXPERIENCES CANADA promptly, most particularly if the incident or accident involves the police or local authorities.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR MEDICAL EXPENSES

If you have to pay for any of your guest's medical expenses which are due to an accident and are not covered under his or her provincial health care and private insurance coverage, please collect and keep the following information:

- name and address of the youth injured;
- nature of the accident;
- original report from the emergency clinic and/or ambulance;
- name and address of attending physician;
- original receipt(s) and
- Name and address of the person who paid the medical expenses.

Contact your Group Organizer to obtain a claim form from EXPERIENCES CANADA's Group Accident Insurance Plan.

RELIGION

If your family attends religious services, invite your visitor to attend with you. However, please respect the fact that the participant may not be of the same faith or may not wish to participate.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Given that some incidents or accidents may become public knowledge and/or of interest to the media, it is imperative that you inform your Group Organizer and/or EXPERIENCES CANADA of any incident or accident. Please direct all inquiries from the media to the Executive Director of EXPERIENCES CANADA, Deborah Morrison, at (613)727-3832 ext. 210 or 613-794-2017.

DISCLOSURE OF CHILD ABUSE OR OTHER INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

You have an obligation to promptly report any abuse or suspected abuse if you believe that the youth participant may be in need of protection. If a participant discloses to you an incidence of child abuse or some other inappropriate

behaviour towards them or someone else, contact the local Child and Family Services agency or your closest office of the R.C.M.P. or provincial police, as well as your Group Organizer and/or EXPERIENCES CANADA. You do not have to prove that child abuse has taken place; that is the responsibility of the investigating authorities.

Inform the youth participant of the action you will take. It is important to be supportive and ensure the referral is followed up. Be ready to listen and have an attitude of openness so that participants will feel comfortable in sharing sensitive information with you, if necessary.

CONCERNS

If you have any concerns about your visitor during the homestay, do not hesitate to contact your Group Organizer. It is not unusual that your visitor may experience some homesickness. Try to keep the youth involved in your day-to-day activities and be as supportive as possible. If the homesickness persists and the participant is still withdrawn, call your Group Organizer.

If the behaviour of your visitor is not acceptable (i.e. talking back, rudeness, unwillingness to participate, etc.), call your Group Organizer to explain the situation. You are the host for the participant but do not have to tolerate inappropriate behaviour. If the situation is not resolvable, you can request to have the delegate removed from your home.

It is important that the youth feels comfortable and safe while away from home. If a participant does not feel comfortable or safe in their environment, they have the right to ask to be moved and placed in another home. The decision to do this will be taken by the Group Organizer. The participant's reasons will be evaluated and moving homes will not be undertaken for frivolous reasons. Please respect the decision taken by your Group Organizer if this situation does arise. Please do not deprive your own child of the opportunity to continue to participate in the exchange if their twin has been moved to another home. They have worked hard toward making this exchange happen and deserve to see it through.

BREACH OF PROGRAM RULES

Youth participants have signed an agreement that they will refrain from alcohol, illegal drugs, vandalism, non-participatory or destructive behaviour and leaving premises without permission. A breach of any of these rules may result in the youth being sent home at their expense. If you suspect that any of the above rules have been broken but are not completely sure, do not accuse as you could

be mistaken. If, however, you are certain, contact your Group Organizer and let them know what has happened. The Group Organizer will determine a course of action and call the youth's parents and, if needed, complete EXPERIENCES CANADA's Accident/Incident Report form.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Liability insurance does not replace automobile insurance. If you use your vehicle, including driving your visitor around during the exchange, your automobile insurance will respond to any accidents.

COMMERCIAL GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

EXPERIENCES CANADA has a Commercial General Liability insurance policy designed to provide requisite coverage for EXPERIENCES CANADA volunteers leading or assisting in the Exchange program up to \$10,000,000. If you plan on undertaking any activities with your participant that may be deemed high-risk, you should ensure that you have your own insurance coverage. Please note that certain activities may be excluded from insurance coverage. Verify with your insurer prior to undertaking any activities that may be deemed too high-risk.

MOTORIZED VEHICLES

EXPERIENCES CANADA does not encourage youth participants to drive. Experienced drivers and parents should make themselves available to transport youth to and from the different events as much as possible. The decision to allow youth to drive cars, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, motorcycles, trucks, etc. is at the discretion of the host family and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of the visitor provided that the youth participant has a valid driver's license, is insured for the vehicle and follows all safety precautions.

WATER SAFETY

For any activity on water, participants must wear a lifejacket. This includes, but is not limited to, boating, canoeing, water-skiing, jet-skiing, sailing, white-water rafting, etc. Prior to taking participants on water excursions, discuss their level of swimming skills. Due caution should be considered when undertaking water-related activities. Please consider the following:

- Presence of a qualified lifeguard or someone with lifeguard/rescue certification,
- Lifejackets for everyone,
- Adult supervision.

Ensure that any water craft being used meets at least the minimum in terms of required safety equipment on board. For more information on safe boating, the Canadian Coast Guard can be contacted at 1-800-267-6687. Remember that a lifejacket is not a substitute for adult supervision, and vice-versa.

SPORTS

Any sport can be dangerous, especially if the participant lacks experience or expertise. Any sporting activity should be supervised by an adult, and common sense should be exercised. Do not let participants undertake any high-risk sporting activities (e.g. rock climbing, running rapids, bungee jumping, sky-diving, etc.). Certain physical activities may also have exclusions from insurance policy coverage and should not be practiced without confirmation of insurance coverage.

FARM SAFETY

If you live on a farming operation, the participant should be taken on a tour of facilities and all potential dangers should be explained. If you will be allowing your visitor to operate any type of farm machinery, instruction must be given on how to do this safely. While some participants are very familiar with a farming environment, most will not be. Do not take anything for granted, especially when it comes to safety precautions.

GUN SAFETY

Keep all firearms locked away and inaccessible. EXPERIENCES CANADA has zero tolerance for any use of firearms.