



**Livingstone  
Range**  
SCHOOL DIVISION

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM Homestay Family Handbook



## Welcome!

Livingstone Range would like to extend a warm welcome and thank you for your participation in our Homestay Program. Staying with a local family is, for international students, one of the most important aspects of their experience in southern Alberta. Your involvement and care are extremely valuable to us.

We try to match students and families as best as we can in order to ensure a great experience for all. We hope it will benefit both you and your student in terms of cultural exchange, understanding and friendship. Hosting an international student is an opportunity to gain a lifetime of memories and we truly hope your student's stay will allow you to do just that.

Further information about our programs can be found on our website at <https://www.lrsd.ca/services/international-program>.

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# International Student Program Contact Information

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## Role of the Homestay Provider

### What makes a great homestay?

While international students are studying here in Livingstone Range, their host families will be their home away from home. As a homestay provider, you offer a caring and nurturing environment to the student and help them to feel accepted as part of your family.

Being far away from home can be initially overwhelming for students; your job is to look after both their physical and emotional needs, much the same as you would for your own children. When students feel safe and cared for, their transition to Canadian life is much smoother. We commend homestay families who make the effort to share the Canadian culture, acquaint the students with local sites of interest and arrange activities that the student may wish to participate in.

We trust that homestay parents will make decisions based on the student's best interest. You are encouraged to contact your Homestay Coordinator for resources and support in managing issues related to your international student's stay.

### As a host parent, what are you expected to provide?

- Private bedroom
- Three wholesome meals a day and snacks as required
- Quiet study space with a lamp
- Access to the common living area of the house

- Bathing facilities
- Use of laundry facilities (with instructions on how to operate them, if required)
- Emotional support
- Academic support
- Interaction with family members
- Participation in family activities and provide some sightseeing experiences ie. Waterton, Frank Slide, Buffalo Jump, Calgary, Lethbridge and other local attractions

## Transportation

Please ensure your student has detailed instructions about how to get to and from school, and to any local attractions or meeting places if they are going out with friends or on a school outing. If the student will ride a school bus, make sure they are able to recognize the driver and/or bus number, and know where to get on and off the bus on both ends of their trip.

Talk about what transportation you are able to provide and what you will not (e.g., rides to volleyball practice but not to close neighbours). Many of our students are not accustomed to getting themselves from place to place or walking on their own, so they will need time to adjust to this idea. Provide assistance to the student in arranging rides (though you are not expected to make all these arrangements yourself) for activities and outings, vacations and recreational activities if you will not be driving him/her yourself. Contact your Homestay Coordinator if you would like to inquire about transportation with other host families.

## How are students matched with families?

The Homestay Coordinators and International Student Program Coordinator will review applications from both potential homestay families and incoming students. They will note hobbies and interests, food preferences, health concerns and allergies, special talents, social preferences and so on. From this information a match will be made, and both the family and student will be informed and asked to approve the match. Contact information is then exchanged between the host family and natural parents.

Providing as much information as possible about your own family and their interests and characteristics will be very helpful in creating a good match. Don't skimp on your application form – the more you can tell us about you the better chance we have to find a student who is a perfect fit!

Although great care is taken to match students with appropriate families, this is not a science and sometimes the match is not quite right, and the student may need to be moved. This shouldn't be viewed as a criticism of the homestay family or the student. That said, a homestay move is a last-resort solution, so all efforts are taken to get the right fit the first time, to prevent unnecessary disruption and upset in the lives of the students and homestay families.

## What if your family and student don't get along? What happens if you can't resolve your issues?

Your Homestay Coordinator is available to provide assistance in helping your student transition to your home and providing a neutral third party to work through conflicts. If attempts to resolve issues in the usual ways (e.g. discussion, review of house rules) is not successful, you can call your coordinator and

request a visit to your home. If the issue is a serious behavioural or emotional concern, your coordinator may refer it to international program staff.

Before a decision is made to remove a student from a home, all reasonable attempts to remedy the situation must be made. The process to relocate a student is as follows:

- Unresolved problem is identified to Homestay Coordinator
- Homestay Coordinator will attempt to negotiate a solution without move
- If no resolution to the problem, coordinator will take issue to LRSD program staff
- International program staff (Division office) will consider the request, and make a final decision based on these criteria:
  - Are the student's basic physical and emotional needs being met in the home?
  - Are there concerns about student safety or well-being?
  - Is there a host family emergency that requires the student to be moved?
  - Are there unresolvable differences between the student and the family?

LRSD considers a homestay move to be a last-resort option, after all other reasonable attempts at a resolution have been exhausted.

## Can you host more than one student?

We have found that for many students and homestay families, hosting two international students works well, provided they have different first languages, as there is a tendency for students to fall back on their first language for communication if they don't have to rely on English as the only common language. Each student must have their own bedroom. You may also find interacting with other host families will be of great assistance both in giving you new ideas and in reassurance as you build your relationship with you student. Host families are paid by LRSD by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month.

## Who is the legal guardian of each international student?

In Livingstone Range School Division, custodianship is held by an LRSD employee, specifically the International Coordinator. This person agrees to ensure that arrangements are in place to meet the students' basic needs and safety while they are LRSD students. Host families will be responsible for day-to-day care, including medical care and ensuring school attendance. Host families act on behalf of the custodian with the best interest of the student in mind. All major or serious incidents must be reported to the Homestay Coordinator.

## Preparations

### How can you prepare for the arrival of your student?

Your Homestay Coordinator will give you information about the student placed with you, including photos and a personal letter. Many students and their parents like to correspond with the host parents before arriving in Canada. You are encouraged to make contact with your student via email/skype/facetime to increase their comfort level when they arrive. Familiarity with the student's



parents will help to increase confidence and decrease adjustment issues down the road.

## Research

The homestay family should be generally familiar with the student's country – its population, climate, lifestyle, food, major cities and so on. Your knowledge about your student's home will not only make him/her feel more at home, it will also encourage acceptance of your way of life. You could try to learn a few simple phrases in your student's language, or even learn to cook a traditional meal. It may also be helpful to talk to other families who have hosted students from this country to learn about particular differences in culture and customs.

## Bedroom

Make sure the student's room is ready. The room should be fully furnished with at least a bed, dresser, lamp, desk and closet. Depending on when your student arrives and where they came from, they may be cold at night, so plan to have some extra blankets or a space heater on hand.

## Storage

Many international students come with a large amount of clothing and luggage. Be prepared to provide storage space for the student's additional belongings.

## House keys

Prepare a house key for your student and be prepared to share security codes or electronic access codes, if necessary.

## Home insurance

LRSD's international student insurance policy will cover accidental damage to a host family home, provided the damage was not willful or the student was not negligent in reporting or acting upon a known issue. It will also not cover normal wear and tear on the home. In the case of willful damage, LRSD will attempt to recover costs from the student's natural parents. For all other non-covered instances of damage, host families should have adequate home insurance in place. Discuss this with your insurance provider.

## Airport Transportation

LRSD takes responsibility for transportation of students to and from the Calgary airport at the beginning and end of their stay. Many families like to make this trip to welcome students when they arrive and to say farewell when they leave and are welcome to do so. It is NOT an expectation for families to transport students, but is greatly appreciated by LRSD and by the students.

Host families will be notified by email of their student's flight itinerary, a few weeks before arrival/departure. You can let your homestay coordinator know if you are going to pick up/drop off your student

at the airport, if you prefer.

## Arrival of Your Student

A student may experience some forms of culture shock upon arrival to an unfamiliar environment. They may be apprehensive and wonder what it will be like living in a new place. The student will need your support, compassion, and encouragement to gain an accurate understanding of your culture and have a positive international experience. With your guidance, the student's visit can become a valuable learning experience.

## Contacting home

One of the first things your student should do is telephone, text, or e-mail home to confirm his/her safe arrival.

## Unpacking

Show your student where to store extra luggage and off-season clothing. Also, make sure there is a safe place to store passport, travel tickets, insurance documents, and money.

## Jet lag

When your student arrives, s/he has probably had a long trip and may have crossed several time zones. Avoid scheduling too many activities. The ill effects of jet lag will be much less if your student sets his/her watch immediately to local time. Also, suggest they drink plenty of water, get lots of fresh air and avoid sleeping during the day, if possible.

A small Welcome Basket in their room can be a nice gesture, where you may include some simple snacks such as a granola bar, whole fruit, water bottle, etc. as they may be uncomfortable asking for things to eat when they first arrive. Student orientation will usually follow within the first week of arrival.

## Things you can do in the first few days

- Keep your student busy, but also allow some time alone. Remember, he/she will be jet-lagged and possibly in culture shock.
- Make sure the student is familiar with your neighborhood. Students may want to go for a walk and could get lost because they are unfamiliar with the pattern of our streets.
- Take the time to learn the correct pronunciation of your student's name.
- Introduce your student to family, friends and neighbors. Write down names to help him/her remember.
- Make sure your student has an ID card with your name, address and telephone number on it, and tell him/her to carry it at all times.
- Show girls where to buy personal hygiene supplies, and all students where to get toiletries. If you live in a rural location, take your student shopping for toiletries and any other personal items they'll require.
- Show your student the route to and from school, or where to get on/off the bus.

- Visit some local points of interest.
- Establish a pattern of daily conversation. Encourage your student to share how his/her day went.
- Relax and make the student feel comfortable.
- Monitor use of electronic devices and calls home. Gently encourage students to spend more time in face-to-face conversation as opposed to large amounts of time connecting with friends and family back home.

## Privacy

Ensure that your student knows you will respect their privacy by knocking on the bedroom door before entering and ask the same in return. Make sure the student understands that you will not pry into his/her personal belongings, phone conversations, mail, etc.

## Discuss homestay guidelines

Homestay families will establish their own rules and curfews, with guidance from the Livingstone Range School Division homestay program where necessary. Respect and courtesy for these guidelines is mandatory during your student's homestay.

It is important to discuss your household guidelines with your student as soon as possible as it will help prevent misunderstandings. Make sure your student understands the guidelines and the reasons for them. You might want to write or type them out, depending on his/her comprehension level.

Establish reasonable consequences for breaking the guidelines, but remember that they have to be age-appropriate and take into consideration that the student is coming from a very different household environment. Adaptability will be important and necessary.

## Orientation of Your Home & Routines

### House tour

After the student has unpacked, give a tour of your house, show where to find things, and explain how to operate appliances. Don't assume your student knows how to operate everyday items; anything from light switches to shower taps can be unfamiliar!

Sometimes students do not want to give the impression they do not understand or their language prevents them communicating their questions. Please be sure to explain things that may seem quite obvious.

Be as clear as you can when giving the tour and let your student know some specifics like:

- Tap water is safe to drink
- Not everything can be flushed down the toilet (but toilet paper can and should be!)
- Take shoes off when entering the house (if that's your custom)
- Recycling practices (they might be different in your student's home country) and your rules about leaving water running, doors open, etc.

- Basements are normal in Canadian houses but may be strange and unfamiliar to your student.
- Show your student how to use appliances. If there are some of them you prefer your student not use, let them know.

## Using the phone for emergencies

Show your student how to use the phone, share your phone number and some important emergency numbers. Make sure the student knows your address – consider writing it down near the phone in case of emergency.

Explain how the 911 system works and discuss what information needs to be provided in an emergency call.

If there is an emergency involving your student, always call 911 first, then contact the Homestay Coordinator with details of the emergency. If the student is transported to a hospital or requires medical care, be sure to notify the medical insurance provider as soon as possible to avoid potential non-coverage of care later.

## Household security system

Show your student how to lock & unlock doors. If you have a household security system, teach the student how it works and have what to do in case of a false alarm or error. Remember to inform your security company that you have a guest in the house who is authorized to be there. If you have an emergency household key hidden outside, let the student know where it is.

## Household areas

Which areas are common and/or which areas are off limits to the student?

## Bathroom

Show the student the hot water heater and explain how your water system works. Again, you might want to explain energy costs and your thoughts about running water while doing dishes or brushing teeth. Discuss an appropriate length of time for a shower. Ensure the student understands that the shower curtain must be placed inside the tub during a shower to prevent flooding and water damage.

Bathroom routines may be very different in your student's country of origin. Have a conversation about the following:

- Should the bathroom door be left open or closed when not in use?
- What is the family schedule for baths and showers? Let your student know you don't have an unlimited supply of hot water so baths may have to be planned.
- How much time is reasonable to spend in the bathroom when others are waiting?
- Which towels/toiletries can the student use and where can they be found? Where should they put wet or dirty towels?

## Kitchen

Ensure your student is familiar with the safe operation of appliances in your home, including your stove, microwave oven, washer/dryer, dishwasher and any other appliances they'll be using. Don't assume they already know; appliances can be quite different in other countries or students may be unaccustomed to making their own meals or doing laundry.

## Laundry

Some questions to consider around laundry:

- Is there a laundry schedule?
- Do you do the student's laundry or do they do their own?
- Where can hand laundry be done and left to dry?

If the student is to do their own laundry, prepare to show them how (e.g. separating darks from lights, amount of detergent, etc.). The student will also have to be taught how to use the machines and told if there are any limits as to the times during which laundry can be done.

## Thermostats

Discuss with your student where you like to keep the heat setting and about energy costs and conservation. They may be unaware that turning the heat up high or leaving it on when no one is in the home can be costly. Encourage your student to put on a sweater or use an extra blanket when it's cold rather than turning up the heat, if that is your family's habit.

## Fire extinguisher and smoke alarm

Tell the student where the fire extinguisher is and how it works. Also, if you have a smoke alarm that often goes off when cooking, explain this to the student. Discuss if you prefer students not to light candles or incense. Also explain how your carbon monoxide alarm works, if applicable.

## Entertainment equipment and TV viewing

Demonstrate how your TV and entertainment systems work. Be sure the student knows which equipment s/he is allowed to use and when. Discuss family rules about appropriate viewing and total TV watching hours.

## Activities

What are the common family activities and in which ones is the student invited to participate? What provisions will be made for the student if the family is away from the house for more than a day? If you plan on being away from home overnight, please contact the Homestay Coordinator.

## Homestay Guidelines

Some guidelines and policies are as follows:

- English must be the primary language spoken in the home. Learning and improving their English skills is the main reason students choose to come to Canada and it is essential that they are immersed in English in the home.
- Students must let you know where they are at all times.
- Students are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol, even if they are over 18 and in high school.
- Students are expected to perform some light chores or assist with some duties in the house. Please discuss these chores and set up a schedule so there is no misunderstanding.
- Students must ask ahead of time if they need rides to special events, have friends stay overnight, want to participate in extracurricular events, etc.
- Students must not be left alone overnight. If you will be away, the student must be supervised by an LRSD-approved host or respite provider, in their home or yours.
- Students must attend school (and all classes) every day unless they are ill. Homestay parents must inform the school if the student is not able to attend school.
- Sleepovers (only in the home of other host families in the same homestay program) may only occur when both sets of host parents have spoken to each other and are in agreement. Sleepovers with Canadian friends require advance notice and permission from the Homestay Coordinator.
- Immigration Canada does not permit students to hold paid jobs while in Canada.

## Curfews

Curfews should be fair and reasonable for your household. Make sure your student has access to proper transportation home at night. Ensuring the safety of your new family member is your responsibility.

## Schedule

Think about your family's schedule and routine and decide how the student might fit into it. You can decide on times when you can and cannot be flexible.

- What time do you get up and go to bed?
- Is there a specific study time in your home?
- When do you eat meals?
- When is it o.k. to watch TV or listen to music?
- When is "quiet time"?
- What time is "lights out" (in common areas and for the student)?

## Household duties

Your student is not a house guest, but rather a member of your family unit. As such, s/he will be expected to work with your family to make the household run efficiently. Taking part in household chores such as sweeping and vacuuming floors, dusting, cleaning the bathtub after use, cleaning bathroom counters, assisting with mealtime dishes, loading the dishwasher and helping to put groceries away are some ways your student can help out.

Students are expected to keep their room and study area neat and tidy. Many students may not have had any of these responsibilities before and you may need to give proper instruction.

## Telephone use: landlines and mobile

Take some time to discuss the following telephone usage guidelines with your student:

- Should your student answer incoming landline calls?
- Will you provide access to your voicemail if you have a landline?
- Is there a limit on the length of landline phone calls?
- If the student has his/her own phone, will you limit the amount of time they use it? This is a frequent cause of conflict, so be clear about your expectations from the start. While the student is settling in, it might be helpful to establish a sliding schedule of phone time – more time at first to connect with home, less time later.
- How late will you permit students to make or take calls on your landline or on their phone? Be flexible with overseas calls to home as students may have limited hours in which to connect.

## Long distance phone access

Do you want the student to use phone cards (this is recommended), get their own cell phone (extended stay), or can the student use the household phone account for their personal long distance calls? If the household phone account is used, what arrangement will be made to pay for the calls and for any bills that come in after the student has left? Please keep in mind that LRSD is not liable for these phone bills.

## Internet use

Internet access must be available in the home. Student should be monitored as they use the internet so they do not spend excessive time on the computer or exceed household data limits. As in all homes, the use of the internet should be monitored carefully. If you have a cap on your internet plan, we strongly recommend that you explain this your student and request that they use reasonable limits on the amount of video streaming that they use. If excessive internet and computer usage becomes a problem, please contact the Homestay Coordinator.

## Use of electronic devices

Increasingly, the majority of students are arriving with various electronic devices with which they will be communicating home. Understand that the student may, in the first few weeks, use these devices frequently. Once the student starts to feel more comfortable, generally they will use them less frequently.

You may need to outline your expectations about use of devices, particularly if there are other children in the home who abide by usage limits. It may be necessary to explain that excessive use of devices can be considered by some to be antisocial behaviour. You should also be aware that excessive use of phones and devices may be a sign your student is experiencing homesickness and/or having a difficult time adjusting to their new circumstances. If it continues to be an issue, please contact your Homestay Coordinator for support.

## Drugs, alcohol, and driving

Even though a student may be of legal drinking age, a condition of their acceptance to study in LRSD is that they may not consume alcohol and or use illicit/recreational drugs (including cannabis). Students are informed of these prohibitions during orientation. Noncompliance may result in the student being sent home.

We remind you that in Canada it is illegal for people under 18 years to purchase cigarettes and to purchase and consume alcohol. It is important for host parents to carefully consider their student's attendance at unsupervised parties or where alcohol is present. International students are not permitted to drive motorized vehicles. Students are permitted to accept rides with those who have a valid class 5 driver's license (age 16 or older), only within town limits. They are not permitted to travel to other towns and on the highway to the cities with anyone under the age of 18.

## Meals & Food

Provide healthy, nutritious meals and snacks to ensure physical well being. If you will not be home for dinner, try to prepare a meal that can be easily heated or microwaved.

### What type of food?

One of the most difficult adjustments for your international student may learning to appreciate new foods. Allow your student some time to adjust, and consider having a few familiar items on hand initially. Do encourage your student to try new things – s/he should not expect to have separate meals provided on a regular basis.

Take your student grocery shopping and show him/her the import food section. You may want to offer to purchase a few specialty items or staples and allow your student to choose which varieties.

Foods favored by young people in your culture may not be the same ones enjoyed by young people in another. Nevertheless, you do not need to arrange special meals for your student, unless the youth has special dietary restrictions due to medical or religious reasons. Very likely the student, perhaps after some initial hesitation, will learn to enjoy the types of food you usually eat.

Give your student a tour of your kitchen, naming food items in the cupboards and refrigerator. Encourage him/her to prepare a favorite dish for your family.

### Table manners

Cultural differences may involve not only a variety of food types, but also may include differences in eating times, methods of serving and presenting food and the manner in which food is eaten. Since your family's table manners may not correspond to your student's, show him/her the proper portion to take and how to eat in a Canadian way. Be accepting of different customs. Your student may be completely unaware that s/he is doing something that is considered poor etiquette here.

### Meal times and family expectations

Some questions to consider and discuss with the student about family meals include:

- What are the common family meal times?
- If the student is not going to be present, how much notice is expected?
- If the student will be absent for a meal, should it be kept for a later time?



## Preparation of breakfasts and lunches

Many students from other countries have never prepared their own meals or may be unfamiliar with Canadian foods and how to prepare them. It is a good idea to take the student grocery shopping with you during the first week to see what kinds of foods are kept in the home and so that special foods can be purchased, within reason. Students may also need help to understand what foods can be expensive here that may not be in their home country (e.g. tropical fruits or import foods). They need to know what foods are for treats or special occasions, and which ones can be eaten without limits.

Students must also be shown where all the various foods in the house are kept. Please be sure to have a discussion about the process for breakfast and lunch during school days. It is the responsibility of the homestay to provide three good meals each day, though students can be expected to prepare some on their own.

## Food outside the kitchen

Is your student allowed to have food and/or drinks in the bedroom, in front of the TV, or around the computer?

## Successful at School

### Educational experience

Host parents will need to monitor their student's attendance and progress at school. Encourage the timely completion of homework and check on progress. Attend meetings and parent/teacher conferences when needed. Showing an interest in your student's progress contributes positively to his/her Canadian educational experience. Students are expected to enroll in a extracurricular activity ie, sports, club or community activity during their stay to keep themselves busy.

### School attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes daily. Homestay parents are expected to contact the school if their student will be absent due to illness. In the event that you receive contact from the school to state that your student has missed classes, please have a discussion with your student and consult your Homestay Coordinator for assistance if the problem cannot be resolved with your student. Students should bring their study permit to the school office to be registered at school.

### Field trips

The school may take students on occasional field trips. Information will be sent to all students' host families regarding these trips. Host parents are allowed to sign permission forms for all school organized trips. The only exception is for out of the province trips which must be approved by the student's Custodian. The host family is asked to be aware of school guidelines on attendance, homework, etc. Please call the school if you have any questions or concerns.

# Money

## Student Expenses

The following are the responsibility of the student:

- Clothes (especially winter clothes)
- School supplies
- Personal toiletries
- Computer/laptop (if desired). All costs associated with their computer are the responsibility of the student. It is strongly recommended that you do not have your international student use your own computer.
- Long distance phone calls
- Cell phone (if desired). If students are bringing a phone, they should pay their own monthly bills or use calling cards to make long distance calls. Do not allow a student to run up a bill on your account.
- Prescription/non-prescription medications
- Dental work (non-emergency dental is not covered under student health insurance)
- Haircuts and other personal services
- Personal entertainment and expenses
- Costs associated with participation in school sponsored activities (e.g. graduation, dances, extra curricular sports, school trips, etc.)
- Stamps, stationery, books, magazines, CDs, posters, etc.

## Allowance

International Students are advised to arrange for an allowance of between \$200 and \$300 per month to cover personal expenses. You may want to inquire every few months regarding how their funds are holding out and remind them to ask their parents to send more funds when necessary to avoid running out. It is unwise to lend money.

## Student insurance

All students are covered for health insurance by a group benefit plan from StudyInsured. This is compulsory. The plan issues a health insurance card for each student, and provides a policy wording explaining the coverage as well as a claim form. All costs for health-related services are the responsibility of the student. At the time of a visit to a physician, the physician may bill the student directly. The student will be reimbursed for expenses eligible under the insurance plan as long as a claim is submitted to StudyInsured with the original bill(s) and any other relevant supporting documentation. Ensure original receipts and claim form are submitted online. Visit <https://www.studyinsured.com/lrsd/en> for more information on the insurance.

**StudyInsured Assistance** is available 24/7 by phone for questions about the coverage, help locating medical providers, reporting serious injury or illness, and help with submitting a claim.

Note that StudyInsured **MUST** be notified as soon as possible if a student suffers a serious illness or

injury resulting in hospitalization/surgery/the need for a high-level diagnostic, or if they receive any type of medical care outside of Canada. Failure to notify within 48 hours may result in an eligible claim being paid to only 80%. 1.866.883.9787 in North America, 1.416.640.7865, worldwide. **In all cases, please contact the insurance company prior to treatment**

**Virtual Doctor** - StudyInsured provides access to virtual health appointments for minor illnesses. We encourage all students to sign up soon after arriving to Canada. Once a student has their profile set up, they can login anytime, fill in an intake form, and see a doctor within minutes. Note that not all medical conditions are appropriate for virtual health appointments. If your request for a virtual health appointment is rejected, please call 1.866.883.9787 to ask the StudyInsured Assistance Team for guidance to another medical provide

## Banking

Students are encouraged to bring a debit or credit card from their home country to make any personal purchases. Advise them not to carry large amounts of cash. Show your student how to use their ATM card and stress the importance of keeping the PIN number secret.

## Cell phone

Help your student arrange for a personal phone, if requested. Students will be responsible for all expenses associated with the cell phone. Host families should never sign for monthly cell phone plans for students

## Travel

International students may travel with their host parents or with the school. If you plan a trip longer than a few days, you should complete the travel request form and provide the International Student Program with your destination, duration of the trip, and address where you can be reached. If your family is planning such a trip you will want to discuss with your student how expenses will be apportioned and make sure expectations regarding money are clear. If traveling to the USA, a ETSA form will be need to be completed in advance for the student, which is valid for a year. There is a fee of \$21 which can be paid online: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>

International Students are, as a rule, not permitted to travel on their own, even to visit relatives or close friends, unless advance arrangements have been made between host families and the student's natural parents. International students are expected to return directly to their home country upon the completion of the program. If special travel arrangements have been made, you will be informed in advance. Even if a student is over the age of 18 they must receive permission from Livingstone Range School Division to travel out of the area alone.

## The Family Experience

### A new family member

Since experiencing family life is one of the best ways to learn about a culture, you should try as much as

possible to let your student take on a family member's role. This role may be quite different from what the student is accustomed to, but it should be one that is natural for you and your family. You will find that treating your international student as a family member will create genuine ties of friendship and foster better understanding of your way of life.

Living as a family member does not mean having special privileges. It may be easier for your student to learn your way of life if you avoid giving preferential treatment. Give him/her some small household chores, just as you would to a son or a daughter, but don't assign tasks that you would normally hire someone to do, such as child-care. It is important not to leave your student alone for long periods of time, though it is o.k. for host parents to be away for short periods to shop or run personal errands, and between school dismissal and the end of work.

## Adapting to a new culture

Your new family member will experience many changes during his/her first few weeks. After the initial excitement of being in a new environment wears off, your international student may suffer from culture shock and become homesick. As the "honeymoon period" fades, both parties may feel dissatisfaction. Try to work through this to a common ground.

Your student may feel disorientated and may suffer physical side effects. S/he may become withdrawn, uncommunicative, or moody, and express the desire to return home. This is normal under the circumstances and should only last for a short time. As your student grows accustomed to the new environment, s/he will relax and gradually feel better.

Activity is a good way to manage homesickness. If the student continues to be withdrawn and shows symptoms such as excessive sleeping, marked weight loss or gain, acute depression, or other irregular behavior you should notify the Homestay Coordinator.

## Host family children

Your children may initially feel some jealousy toward the student because s/he is receiving additional attention. Try to include your children in the orientation activities.

## Learning English

### Help with English

Most of our international students will require assistance with English. Keep your language simple and direct, but do not talk down to the student. It is important to engage your student in conversation. Speak in short, basic sentences at first, to help reduce confusion if your student arrives with rather limited English skills. Students will indicate that they understand when in reality, they do not and may find it embarrassing to admit they do not comprehend. You need to paraphrase often and check that they understand clearly. This is especially important when giving instructions, so they don't feel they have let you down if they make a mistake or misunderstood you.

Put sticky labels on common items in the house to help the student learn these names. Put common English words on the refrigerator. Keep a language dictionary handy for quick translation to help with the student's assignments; do not do the work for them. Help the student by editing homework, but be careful not to change the content, even if you do not agree with it.

## "Silent Period"

The process of learning a new language incorporates four skill areas, mastered in this order:

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking.

Your student may understand quite a bit of what you're saying, but may not yet be comfortable expressing him/herself freely in English. There may be a silent period where your student is absorbing the new environment and family structure, and gaining confidence to engage in conversation and ask questions. You can help ensure your student understands what is being said by asking questions that require more than a yes/no response, but be patient with early attempts at speaking and try not to be too discouraged if your student doesn't communicate much at first. Once students get settled in at school, their language skills will probably improve quickly.

## Communication, communication, communication

Strong communication skills are the key components to every healthy relationship. There will be awkward moments, confusing situations and times of disillusionment. Sometimes communication is difficult and compromise is needed or need the time to think things through. Difficult situations can usually be resolved if they are dealt with calm and respect. We enjoy the humor and novelty of cultural difference, we also need to be sensitive to discomforts and difficulties. People of different cultures present themselves in various ways. What you may take as indifference, coolness, slowness, thoughtlessness or rude may only be a mutual misunderstanding of signals. We ask that you please be patient and things will fall into place.

You will need to be supportive, honest and open with your student. Whether your student is lonely or having trouble with school work, friends etc. your advice and reassurance is always welcome. While you cannot anticipate his/her every need, honesty and openness will provide a strong foundation for your relationships. Your student is far from home, compassion is necessary to help your student feel accepted, secure, loved and to help him/her overcome culture shock and homesickness.

## Wellbeing

### Emotional wellbeing

Providing opportunities for your new family member to interact with other people will reduce boredom and improve emotional well-being. Include your student in your family activities, but as with any teenager give him/her adequate time to spend with friends.

Include your student in family discussions and decisions. Ask their advice. It might be interesting to learn how another culture might handle certain situations.

## Meeting people

You should make an effort to introduce your international student to other young people of the same age group. You might consider planning a reception with friends and neighbors for this purpose. Although friendships are encouraged for the students, romantic attachments are discouraged.

## Physical wellbeing

Encourage your student to exercise, get proper sleep and eat a balanced diet. Most students like to be involved in physical activity, so encourage your student to participate. Physical fitness will help them feel well and happy.

## Adjusting to climate and weather

As Albertans, we know how the weather can change quickly and drastically. Many foreign students are not aware of this. They need to be taught that when they go out for the day, they need to be prepared for our volatile Alberta climate. They may be unaware of issues such as frostbite, hypothermia and wind-chill factor, and will need your help in understanding how to be wise about and prepare for a variety of weather conditions.

## Spiritual wellbeing

If your international student practices a faith other than your own, you will want to provide a list of places to worship. Very often, the youth may wish to learn about your family's religion. If so, it would be perfectly appropriate to invite him/her to attend religious services with you, but this should not be an expectation if the student is not comfortable with it.

## What if Problems Arise?

### Difficulties at school

Should any school-related concerns arise, host families are asked to contact the school principal. If necessary, the Homestay Coordinator can be contacted to help resolve student issues. In the case of serious behavioural issues or failure to attend school, International Program staff should be notified by the host parent or Homestay Coordinator.

### What should I do if my student flagrantly disobeys the house rules?

Contact your Homestay Coordinator for assistance. The situation will be reviewed and a solution or consequence will be determined. Your Coordinator may refer the issue to program staff.

## What do I do if despite everything I've tried, the student doesn't fit well in my household?

This happens very seldom, but it does happen. The Homestay Coordinator will be in contact with you within the first few days of your student's arrival to see how things are going and to answer any questions or concerns you may have. We encourage you to let the Coordinator know if you are having unresolvable difficulties.

If a move becomes necessary, it will follow the procedure outlined in Section 2.

## Accidents and insurance

In the unlikely event that your visitor requires medical attention, you are authorized to make necessary arrangements. Livingstone Range School Division carries insurance on international students (coverage information and an insurance card issued to the student will be provided to the student and a copy to host families for safekeeping. Any costs not covered by the student's insurance are ultimately the responsibility of his/her natural parents.

## Damage to property

If a student causes damage to your property, please notify the Homestay Coordinator of the incident immediately. Take pictures and note the circumstances around the damage. It may also be necessary to inform your insurance company. Student insurance covers accidental damage, but neither the company nor students are responsible for normal wear and tear.

## Emergency medical visits

In an emergency, the student's health insurance card will access medical services at all clinics and hospitals in Canada. Please go to the hospital Emergency Department only for services such as major cuts and broken bones etc. Show the emergency staff student's insurance card. You will also need to contact the Homestay Coordinator immediately.

Students should always call the insurance emergency number on the back of their insurance card before they visit a doctor every time whether it is a clinic or a hospital to ensure their claim is covered and to know what documents they will need to get in order to ensure coverage. It is important before leaving the hospital emergency unit, the student obtains a copy of the full emergency medical report, as it is required for their insurance claim.

## Insurance claims

If the student requires prescription drugs, they will have to pay first and then get their money back from the insurance company. For that they will have to start a claim form. A form is included with their insurance information upon arrival to Canada.

## Extension of Stay

If a student would like to extend their stay, they would first need to seek approval from your family and it is at your discretion. There is no obligation to extend a stay. Extension of insurance and compensation would need to be discussed with the Bio parents. The LRSD international program is completed at the end of June and we are no longer involved in homestay support into the summer. The Extension of Stay form would need to be completed and sent to the homestay coordinator.

## Departure

Before departure, you should check that the student has his/her travel documents (passport, visa, return ticket etc.) in order. In most cases, he/she will be able to check in online 24 hours before their departure.

Host families will be notified by email their student's flight itinerary, a few weeks before arrival/ departure. You can let your homestay coordinator know if you are going to pick up/ drop off your student at the airport, if you prefer.

You may wish to make a few plans before the student leaves, such as a final wish list of things to see or do before departure.

Many families keep in touch with their students via Whatsapp, Zoom, or Skype. It's great to keep those connections and can create opportunities for host families and students to visit each other in their home countries.

## Tell Us About Your Experience

You are encouraged to complete the Evaluation Form that will be sent to you at the end of the program and share your experiences, successes, challenges and your suggestions for other host families. We hope your experience was enjoyable and tell other interested families about the International Student Homestay Program.

## Thank You!

The Livingstone Range School Division International Student Program thanks you for your important role in ensuring a happy, safe, rewarding and memorable stay for your student.

As a homestay family you are an ambassador for our division, our community and Canada. You are helping to promote cultural diversity and understanding. We hope you gain as much from the experience as your student does.



# Communication / Protocol

