

# International Host Family Handbook

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A Ministry of Calvary Baptist Church

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## **HOMESTAY PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Goals of the Homestay Family**

The primary goal of the Plymouth Christian Academy Homestay (Host) Family program is to provide a home environment for international students that will enrich and support the mission of the school through a Christ-centered, loving, and supportive family experience.

International students choose to attend Plymouth Christian Academy primarily for the purpose of improving their English language skills with the goal of gaining admittance into a U.S. college or university. The best way for students to attain this objective is through immersion in an English-speaking home environment as well as through the daily study of academic disciplines in English. Living with an American homestay family also enables our international students to gain first-hand cultural understanding. This responsibility does demand time and attention and should not be taken lightly. Please ensure that your family and personal schedules allow the time it will take to invest in the life of the student in order to meet these goals.

Your international student may not be a Christian but has chosen to study at PCA with the full awareness that he or she will be living with a Christian host family and studying in a Christian school. Your student understands that he or she will have a Bible class each year, attend a weekly chapel, and attend church with your family. We don't require that the students believe what we believe, but we do ask them to respect our beliefs. We also commit that we will respect them. It is our prayer that through the experiences the student will share with your family, the Holy Spirit will guide him or her to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

### **International Student Goals for Growth** (adapted from ASD#43)

The PCA international student will grow in:

- Communication to express themselves fluently both orally and in writing
- Ability to work independently and develop research and study habits to support their independence
- Problem-solving, using a variety of strategies
- Cultural understanding and diversity
- Their ability to take responsibility for their actions and make personal decisions
- Skills used in cooperating with others working together
- Ability to manage/maintain their personal health

## **EXPECTATIONS OF HOST FAMILIES**

### **Financial Responsibilities of Host Families**

Host families provide housing, transportation to and from school and activities, and food consisting of 3 meals a day. Some students may have monies on their school lunch account. If the student doesn't prefer the school lunch, the host family is still responsible to provide the student with food for lunch.

Students will purchase some of their own snacks, but a host family should provide food to the international student as they would for their own children. This would include some snacks and paying for a meal at a restaurant if the family chooses to eat out.

Your student is responsible for all additional expenses for personal items or activities, including but not limited to: purchasing special foods and snacks not part of your family's normal diet, restaurant meals when it is not the family meal, personal entertainment such as movies and sporting events when it is not a family event, personal travel, personal items like more expensive brands of toiletries and clothing.

**CELL PHONES:** The international student is responsible to pay for his or her cell phone plan. It is common that international plans are paid monthly at storefront providers so it will be necessary for the host family to make timely monthly visits to the store to pay for the plan. It is NOT acceptable to add the student to your family plan and have the student pay the host family.

Host families will receive a monthly stipend of \$700/month to cover the cost of rent, food, utilities, transportation and other miscellaneous items. Host families will receive a Form 1099 at the end of the calendar year for income received being a host family. It is the responsibility of the host family to keep detailed records of costs for hosting their international student to "offset" the income received. It is advisable to set aside a portion of the monthly stipend for tax purposes.

#### **THE BLESSING OF BEING A HOST FAMILY**

The Plymouth Christian International Student Program Host Family provides a caring "home away from home" experience for students from other countries who are enrolled in Plymouth Christian. American Christian families "adopt" international students to learn from them and to love them as sojourners in our land. Host families seek, by their caring lifestyle, conversation and prayers, to demonstrate biblical Christianity to the student. For some of our international students, Christianity is condemned or even persecuted in their home countries. God has provided a way for these students to hear the Truth of His Word and His great love for them by being a part of your family. Your church will play an important role as well when the international student sees your church family model the Christian life and involvement in service at church. Our aim is that the international students will see the church in America in action and not just a place where American families go on Sunday mornings.

Of course, international students are not the only ones who benefit. The inherent rewards of international friendships to Americans and their children are many. One gets to see the world (current events, politics, distribution of wealth, war, family, relationships, values and beliefs, etc.) through the eyes of a different culture. This can affect one's ministry priorities, use of resources, career goals, choice of friends, and even day-to-day lifestyle as one is exposed to the variety in God's world and begins to act on God's intentions for it. Further, being a host family is a wonderful way to experience the joy of being God's ambassador.

## HELPING YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FEEL WELCOME

### Hospitality Hints

You may wonder how you can help your student feel welcome and settled in. Here are some helpful tips:

- a. Learn something about your student's country, culture and customs before his or her arrival. You may read books or search the internet to get more information. As you learn about your student's cultural background, keep an open mind and avoid stereotyping or prejudging. Seek to know your student and learn about his or her cultural background. Learn more about your own American cultural values. Realize American values of time, work, honesty and equality are different from other cultures' values. This will help you and your student understand and anticipate differences and manage conflict more easily.
- b. When your student arrives, ask him or her what kinds of foods he or she is accustomed to eating so you have a better idea of his or her likes and dislikes. Also, ask your student if there are any dietary restrictions.
- c. Welcome your student with warmth and friendship. Learn to pronounce your student's name. Ask what name they prefer to be called at your home.
- d. Speak distinctly but not loudly or overly slow. International students can often understand English better than they can speak English. It is more helpful to pause between sentences than to speak each word slowly. Try to avoid use of slang expressions until your student's informal English vocabulary increases as many international students have only learned standard English. International students may arrive without the skills to use polite English grammar when stating a request. Try not to interpret a direct request as a sign of rudeness and use this opportunity to coach in this area.
- e. Show genuine interest in your student. Get him or her to talk about himself. Ask her about family, education, religious background, home life, culture, customs, food likes and dislikes, aspirations, activities, and plans. Learn greetings in your student's language. Give her time to answer and encourage her to ask questions about you, your family or the United States as well. Some international students may be much more willing to talk about politics or religion than Americans are. In any event, do not argue with your student. Don't pry if he seems hesitant. Use natural avenues in these discussions like Bible class or research paper projects to launch discussions.
- f. You may not always understand or agree with your student, but you should avoid making value judgments such as "right and wrong" or "better and worse" about aspects of his or her culture. Recognize these differences are simply differences.
- g. As you welcome your student, make sure to go over the family guidelines with your student to avoid misunderstandings and potential conflicts later. Discuss behaviors that violate host family guidelines early on so good behavior patterns are established and these issues can be addressed without anger, frustration or resentment. Also make sure your student understands that he or she is free to have food and drinks in the refrigerator or pantry and to prepare a meal in the kitchen (if allowed).

- h. Your student may not be accustomed to the way typical Americans eat at the dinner table. In some cultures, it is not the custom to start eating as soon as you are served; rather, people wait until everyone has been served. Similarly, your student may come from a culture where it is considered impolite to accept a second serving until it has been offered several times. With these possible cultural differences in mind, take time to explain American customs at the dinner table.

### **Conversational Hints**

It will take time to feel at ease with conversation with your international student. Be patient! The best conversations begin by asking the Lord to give you wisdom and insight into their world. Then keep your eyes and ears open for good starting points. Conversation may begin over food, language, clothes, customs, or even something in his or her room like a poster or picture on the wall. Here are other helpful things to remember:

- It is good to speak slowly and clearly, and to avoid insider terminology or slang. Sarcasm is very pervasive in American culture, but it is not something that is translated well to your international student!
- Let them know you are interested in learning about their culture and language. Maybe ask them to help you cook one of their favorite cultural dishes. Ask questions and be a good listener. Let them tell about themselves, their home country, and their experiences. You should also share about yourself as well, so the conversation isn't one-sided.
- Don't give up if there's difficulty communicating with one another! If you feel something hasn't been understood, then say it again (not louder), but using other (simpler) words. Remember international students are having more difficulty than you are. They will appreciate your patience and effort at trying to understand.
- Often it is more relaxing and easier to talk if you're eating or drinking something. You may need to offer something more than once (in some cultures it's polite to refuse several times first).
- In our political, volatile world, sometimes "hot" political themes or arguments come up. It's wise to avoid such topics. If you get caught by a "hot issue," it's possible to say, "You have an interesting viewpoint. I probably haven't thought about that as much as you have. Why do you feel that way about it?" Listening without arguing will show them you're interested, and after listening, it may be easier to gently ask about something else. Refrain from hostile attitudes towards government leaders, remembering what God says in Rom. 13:1-3 and I Pet. 2:13-16.
- Don't be judgmental of their thoughts, views or culture. And don't be too surprised if they criticize our country. This is all part of learning to live in a new culture.
- As your international student share about themselves, ask "why" type questions. For example, "Why do you wish to study medicine?" This helps move the conversation to issues of life, goals and faith.
- As you converse with each other, pray in silence, asking God to give you an opportunity to share your faith, but don't force it. There will be other chances. It's helpful and freeing to remember that, ultimately, no one comes to faith because of us, but because of the Holy Spirit's work. When the conversation moves towards faith, be sure to ask what they mean when they use religious expressions. He or she could mean something quite different from what you think. As

you rely on the Spirit of God, you may find an opportunity to share something of what Christ has done for you. Most international students will listen carefully as you share personal things from your own life experience.

### **Inter-Cultural Adjustment Process**

Culture shock is a normal part of student adjustment to a new culture. The middle stages of culture shock, which can include flight (avoidance) and fight (confrontation and anger), can sometimes cause students to feel particularly anxious or depressed. As a host family, you should keep in mind that adjusting to life in a different country takes time. Typically, host families and international students go through the following stages in their intercultural adjustment:

#### **Stage One – Honeymoon**

Your student has finally made it to the United States after months of preparation for the new chapter of his or her life. Your student will be excited that he or she is finally in the U.S. and also enthusiastic about meeting new people and experiencing new things and places. You, too, will be excited about the new addition to your family and feel great about your decision to host an international student.

Unfortunately, this honeymoon period will not last forever in most cases.

#### **Stage Two – Homesickness/Flight and Fight**

Your student will now start to really recognize cultural differences between the home country and the United States. As you can imagine, cultural differences can be shocking and hard to accept. A student's reaction to cultural shock may present itself in different forms and vary from student to student. Some students may feel annoyed, frustrated, or angry while other students may feel homesick or lonely. You might also notice your student has been spending a lot of time alone in his or her bedroom. Or, you might hear your student say in anger "that's not how it works in my country!" At this stage, you might wonder what happened to your student.

#### **Stage Three – Cultural Adaptation**

Your student will be on the road to recovery. Your student will start to learn to overcome cultural shock. You may notice a positive change in your student's attitude. This is a sign that your student has finally started to accept reality and outgrow the previous stage where he or she acted in denial. Once your student's mindset has arrived at this stage, his or her feelings will be stabilized, and your student will find a way to enjoy him or herself in the United States.

#### **Supporting Your Student**

As you and your student navigate through the ups and downs of the intercultural adjustment process, keep in mind that understanding the conflicting emotions that your student may experience is crucial. You should not take your student's occasional negative attitude personally. Try to remain open to your student's feelings and complaints. Don't argue with your student. Don't deny your student's negative feelings that he or she may express to you. Instead, focus on helping your student understand that, as part of the intercultural adjustment process, it is common and normal to develop negative feelings. If you have any questions or concerns about your student's behavior, please contact the International Homestay Coordinator. Plymouth Christian Academy is here to support you in this. We understand the middle stages of cultural shock can sometimes cause students to feel particularly anxious or depressed.

If a student is feeling particularly low, crying for several nights in a row, has become aggressive or talked about hurting himself or herself or others, host families must share this information with the International Homestay Coordinator immediately. Families and PCA staff should work together as a support team to help a student who shows signs of extreme stress. Additionally, you can help your student better adjust to a new environment by researching school and community activities that may bring about a positive impact on your student's adjustment process. Your student may not know all available opportunities for getting involved in school and the local community. Making new friends and finding something to keep them occupied will help quicken recovery from homesickness or perhaps even deter homesickness.

## **GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IN YOUR HOME**

### **Academic Support**

While PCA international students must have achieved a certain level of academic success to be accepted into the program, they, like all high school students, will have areas of academic weakness. It is important as a host parent to keep on top of their grades through the Parent Portal. Host parents should engage with their international student's academic progress in much the same manner they would for their own students: ask about classes, projects and tests; help the student to review or study for a test; answer questions and give suggestions when guidance is requested. If a student seems to be struggling or unduly stressed, please contact PCA Education Specialist, Julie Bottorff, who will follow up with the student and teachers as necessary.

There may be times when mandatory after school tutoring is needed. These are usually scheduled weekly for approximately an hour.

You and your student, with the help of the Homestay Coordinator, PCA Guidance Counselor and/or international host agency will need to review and choose ACT/SAT/TOEFL testing sites. The costs for these tests will be covered by the student. You are requested to provide your student with transportation to and from the testing location. If your student registers for an exam without discussing the testing plan with you first, and neither you nor your spouse can give your student a ride to and from the testing location, you can ask your student to cancel the test registration and re-register for another exam at his or her own cost.

### **Bedroom**

You are required to provide a separate bed for each student, storage space for personal items and access to a bathroom. Your student's bed cannot be placed in an open area such as a family room or furnished basement. All bedrooms must have full access outside. If a bedroom is in the basement, a full or egress window is required. Additionally, you must provide adequate storage for clothing, a quiet study area consisting of a desk or table, chair, and adequate lighting. Many host families use the dining room table for this study area.

### **Chores**

Chores are a part of the American home. International students are required to take part in family chores, including doing family dishes, doing the student's own laundry, and cleaning the bathroom, bedroom and common areas of the home. Please keep in mind that due to the restrictions of their student visas, international students are strictly prohibited from working for compensation. Unauthorized employment may result in cancellation of the student visa. As a result, international students may not be employed on either a full or part time basis except sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

You should not ask your students to perform large chores such as pulling weeds or cleaning gutters unless other members of the family are involved in the same chores. Your student may not be required to requested to do any chores that involve chemicals, heavy machinery, sharp objects, heights or bodily fluids. Your student should not be expected to act as a regular babysitter or housekeeper.

### **Communications**

To give your student's parents peace of mind, please follow the guidelines below:

- Host families are expected to fill out a monthly report of a student's progress and/or experiences. This report will be emailed to you by either PCA or the host agency. If by the host agency, you may "cc" the International Host Coordinator a copy of the monthly report.
- International students are expected to Skype/Facetime or call their parents in the home country at least weekly.
- Host families are expected to have regular family meetings to address family and student needs. The host parent should also intentionally connect one-on-one with their international student to personally encourage, challenge, and pray for their student according to what is going on in their life that week.

### **Computers, Electronic Devices and the Internet**

Host families are required to provide wireless internet at no extra cost to the student and must have a filter system and spyware software. Please ensure that your student's computer and electronic device(s) interface with your computer network.

Your student will need to use the internet in your home for school work and for communication with their family back home. Use of the internet for entertainment purposes can be limited by the host family. Some students will need more limits and guidelines than others. Electronic devices in the student's bedroom should be discouraged, however, you may grant an exception when privacy is necessary in your judgment. Host parents reserve the right (and are strongly encouraged) to monitor all computer activity using internet filters or other filtering programs. This is to ensure the safety of all students and not meant to invade the privacy of the students.

Students are required to turn off all electrical devices no later than 11PM. Students may occasionally request permission from the host family for late night with technology for academic purposes or for communication with family/friends in their home country. Host families will make reasonable efforts to grant access for such purposes but reserve the right to grant or deny such a privilege as they see fit.

Students are expected to have a working cell phone that can be reached by dialing a U.S. domestic phone number. Host families should make sure that the student adds minutes to his phone each month as needed. If the student does not comply with this rule, host families can contact the International Homestay Coordinator for additional support in this requirement.

International students are strictly prohibited from intentionally viewing a website with pornography, extreme violence, profanity, and/or any other inappropriate content. Depending on the severity of conduct, an international student may be subject to discipline, including and up to expulsion, from Plymouth Christian Academy. Please contact that International Homestay Coordinator if you have concerns regarding your student's use of the internet.

### **Socializing and Dating**

The public display of any sort of romantic affection—hand-holding and kissing, for example – is not allowed. Students are encouraged to develop healthy friendships. Homestay students will abstain from all sexual activity. Any romantic involvement or dating is not allowed. Homestay students may not take any action that may change the nature of his or her life such as becoming engaged or married.

International students who attend the barn dance, homecoming or prom must be in groups and not as a “couple” date. One-on-one dating is not allowed. Homestay students must also get approval from their host parents or the Homestay Coordinator to attend dances or group dates.

### **Discipline Philosophy**

Within the international student program, discipline takes place by both Plymouth Christian Academy (faculty and staff) and by the host family. This discipline is coordinated by PCA to produce the best educational environment for the student. Plymouth Christian Academy and the host family work together as a team. Under no circumstances is the host family allowed to use corporal punishment on the international student.

We seek to develop relational capital and trust with students early in the relationship. We also seek to observe students doing things that are good so we can give them encouragement and praise. At times, we need to address unhealthy patterns of behavior that are either hurting the student or those around him or her. When an area needing correction is identified, we seek to keep “short accounts,” not waiting very long to directly address the concern with the student and host family. We also seek to discipline in love, not anger. Addressing situations early help make this possible.

All international students are required to read the International Student Homestay Handbook which details obligations and rules that each international student must follow while enrolled at Plymouth Christian Academy. International students may be disciplined in accordance with the PCA Student Handbook and/or the International Student Handbook. We recommend that host parents also read the International Student Homestay Handbook.

If a student repeatedly breaks school rules, including those set forth in the International Student Homestay Handbook, or is found to be doing any illegal activity, the student will be sent home

immediately at the parent's expense and the I-20 is terminated for discipline reasons in the U.S. Immigration database. Federal law necessitates these steps and Plymouth Christian Academy will not keep a student who has repeatedly broken the school rules or any applicable U.S. laws. Please advise the International Homestay Coordinator if you have any issues regarding unacceptable or unruly behavior that you are not able to handle with your student.

### **Driving Vehicles/Driver's License**

While enrolled at Plymouth Christian Academy, your student may not acquire a driver's license in the U.S. unless they attend driver's education school (only allowed by PCA on a case by case basis) at their own expense. Your student may not operate any type of motor vehicle including a golf cart and four-wheeler. Under no circumstances should you allow your student to operate a motor vehicle even in your own driveway or backyard.

### **English Only**

You are encouraged to enforce an "English Only" rule in your household and whenever you are with your student, except when your student is on the telephone or Skyping with his or her family and friends back in their home country. Improving your student's proficiency in English will not only help your student perform better in school, but also help the better cope with homesickness and adjusting to a new environment in the United States.

### **Family Guidelines**

You are expected to develop your own family guidelines and communicate these to your student. Your family guidelines should explain how it works in your home. You should not take anything for granted. Examples of items to be covered in the family guidelines include, but are not limited to:

- Dinner time, bedtime, and study-time (10 or 11PM is fairly standard, an hour later on weekends)
- How laundry is handled (many international students will not be familiar with American washing machines or dryers)
- Curfew hours
- How to clean the kitchen or dining area after your student cooks or eats
- Dress code outside of your student's bedroom
- How to run a dishwasher or other appliances
- What to do in an emergency in the home
- Family table manners including who sets the table and who clears the dishes
- How to clean up after yourself in the bathroom (no toothpaste, hair, shavings in sink, flush toilet, towels on floor, etc.)

### **Church Services and Weekend Family Activities**

Your student is required to attend weekly church services with your family. Youth group activities will be mutually agreed upon by the host family, student and International Homestay Coordinator. You are expected to include your student in all other family activities on weekends or holidays, including those with extended family. Remember to treat your student as your own child!

### **Insurance**

Your student will have medical insurance either purchased through PCA or through the agency they came under. Your student will receive an insurance identification card and should always carry this with him or her. Host families will also receive copies of the insurance card to be accessible as well. Host families are not responsible for their student's medical expenses. The student's parents are responsible for all medical costs the student incurs. Please make sure that all bills are in your student's name and that you use the school address for all medical visits (43065 Joy Road, Canton, MI 48187).

### **Problem Resolution/Host Family Assignment**

You and your student may face challenges from time to time during your student's stay at your home. You and your student should discuss issues that arise between you to see if they can be resolved privately. If an issue cannot be resolved between you and your student, PCA staff can step in and help. Generally, unless extenuating circumstances exist, international students are not allowed to change their host families, and host families are expected to remain committed to hosting an originally assigned student for the whole academic year. The International Homestay Coordinator determines when reassignment of a student is necessary or warranted.

### **Short Trips**

International students often get invitations to church retreats or other trips with an American friend's family. If your student is leaving the area for an overnight trip, you must obtain written permission via email from your student's parents. Students and host families must also communicate these plans and forward the permission email to the International Homestay Coordinator. There may be an exception to this policy if the student is associated with a host agency. Their policy on such matters has priority.

### **Social Media Policy**

To protect the privacy of each host family, international students must follow Plymouth Christian Academy's social media policy. International students are not allowed to post pictures or videos of any member of the host family without the host family's prior approval. Nor are they allowed to discuss any matters related to any member of the host family unless they obtain prior approval of the host family. Furthermore, international students must promptly delete any comments, pictures or videos related to the host family if requested by the host family. Similarly, you are expected to provide the same level of privacy to your student regarding social media. Please ask your student for permission before mentioning or posting pictures of them.

### **Supervision and Whereabouts**

Your overall supervision of the student is one of your most important obligations in hosting a student. The host family must know where the international student is at all times. You should instruct your student to text/call you if their intended plans change. The student is required to have a working cell phone with minutes available for both talk and text and must respond to a call/text from a host parent immediately if outside of school hours.

You cannot leave your student alone overnight. If you schedule a trip, you must either take your student with you or arrange a temporary stay for your student with another host family approved by PCA prior to your scheduled trip. You must notify the International Homestay Coordinator when these

plans are made. In case of emergency, you must contact the International Homestay Coordinator for assistance in finding an alternate host family.

### **Transportation**

Your student will rely on you for transportation. You must provide your student with transportation to and from school. You are also required to arrange or provide transportation for your student to and from church and extracurricular activities such as sports, retreats or other school functions. Students should discuss ride needs with you 24 hours in advance whenever possible and your flexibility in providing rides will be in the context of your overall family needs. Under no circumstances should you allow your student to hitchhike, solicit a ride from stranger or use Uber or similar services. Your student is not allowed to accept a ride not approved by you in advance. The host family is also responsible for transportation to and from the airport for the student.

### **Visitors in Your Home**

Your student may have a guest at your home subject to your prior approval of the visit. International students may have the opportunity to visit their student while they study at PCA. We encourage this. International students' families are requested to let us know at least two weeks in advance of their visit. If you are the first to learn of a family visit, please notify the International Homestay Coordinator as soon as possible. Your student's family is not permitted to stay in your home. Usually students stay with their family at a nearby hotel during their visits.

## **SAFETY AND HEALTH**

### **Safety of Students**

You are expected to share in Plymouth Christian Academy's responsibility for each student's safety. Keep an eye on your student as he or she develops friendships and try to meet his or her friends.

Please know where your student is going or where he or she is at all times and ensure that the driver has a valid driver's license and is a safe, responsible driver. Don't be afraid to step in, as you would with your own child, if you foresee any trouble.

### **Accident or Illness**

- Provide initial care for your student and seek medical attention if needed
- You must ensure that your student brings the insurance card with him or her and the signed Medical Release Form and present them to the hospital or physician to obtain treatment.
- Contact the International Homestay Coordinator as soon as possible.
- Make sure that you and/or the student (depending on language ability) inform the student's parents of any medical issues.
- Proceed with the doctor's advice for emergency treatment.

### **Abuse/Assault**

If you witness or hear about the abuse or assault of any PCA international student, please contact the International Homestay Coordinator immediately.

### **Dangerous Recreational Activities**

You may not allow your student to participate in any dangerous recreational activities from which a risk of serious physical injury can be reasonably discerned. Examples of such dangerous activities include, but are not limited to: ski jumping, hang gliding, bungee jumping, use of firearms at a shooting range, and skydiving.

If you knowingly allow your student to engage in a dangerous recreational activity, you will be fully responsible for any harm arising out of your student's involvement in such an activity. You may take your student for more common types of recreational activity. Such recreational activity includes: hiking, cross country or downhill skiing, snowboarding, zip lining, swimming, canoeing and kayaking.

### **Compliance with Laws Including Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Use**

All international students must comply with all laws of the United States including state laws and municipal ordinances. Under no circumstances may students use, purchase or possess any tobacco products, drugs or alcohol. All international students are required to comply with all laws of the United States as a condition of their student visa. If you learn that your student has violated any applicable law, contact the International Homestay Coordinator immediately.

Although many laws are apparent, some laws may not be apparent to your student depending on your student's background. For example, in some European countries, the legal drinking age can be as young as 16. We ask you not take anything for granted and help your student to understand and comply with all laws of the United States.

### **Weapons**

You may not allow your student to use, possess, purchase, or own any type of weapons such as a knife or firearm under any circumstances. The only exception is when your student uses a regular cooking knife to prepare meals with your prior approval.

### **Change in Medical Status**

If you learn that your student is diagnosed with a previously undisclosed or unknown condition, please notify the International Homestay Coordinator immediately so PCA can determine what steps must be taken.

## **GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES**

### **Healthy Emotional and Physical Boundaries**

Setting appropriate student-to-student boundaries and adult-to-student boundaries is an important part of the international student program. Below are boundaries and guideposts that must be followed to the extent applicable to you and your student:

- The student can be home for a few hours by him or herself but should not be home alone or with just other students overnight.
- At no time should a male student enter a female student's room or vice versa. Host parents should use discretion when entering a room of a student of the opposite gender. It is always

good protocol for either parent to knock first and ask permission before entering a student's room.

- Plymouth Christian Academy employee policy states that teachers and staff should never be alone with a student. We understand and allow for the uniqueness of the host family responsibilities and therefore allow host parents to be alone with students in the home for short periods of time or while driving the students to school, etc., but require another adult (usually the spouse) to know of this situation in these instances.

### **Guidelines for Appropriate Interactions with Student**

As a host parent to an international student, your actions should at all times be above reproach and guided by the best interests of the student. Although it is not an exhaustive list, the following is a reminder that all interactions between you and the student should be safe, healthy, positive and respectful. By agreeing to serve as a host parent and family:

- You accept the responsibility for the healthy and safe development of the student.
- You understand and fully accept the trust placed in you by the student and his or her family.
- You accept your responsibility as a host parent to establish and maintain healthy boundaries with the student and to refrain from taking advantage of or otherwise exploiting the imbalance of power for any reason.
- You pledge to nurture the well-being and safety of the student, and to do all you can to promote their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth during this host family stay.
- You acknowledge that the inherent imbalance of power in a relationship between a student and adult requires the adult charged with the student's care to set limits and maintain healthy, professional boundaries at all times.
- In serving as a host parent to an international student, you agree never to engage in any verbal or physical contact with the student that is sexual in nature, and understand that sexual or amorous behavior between you and the student, even if allegedly in jest and even if the student initiates, encourages or appears to encourage such advances or behaviors, is wholly inappropriate and a severe breach of your responsibilities as a host parent.

The following are examples of sexual conduct and other inappropriate behavior regarding interactions with the student:

- engaging in any sexual or dating relationship with the student
- Engaging in sexual, romantic or overly familiar communications with the student directly in person or indirectly through the use of email, telephone, social networking or other media
- Engaging in, participating in or condoning in any way the use of alcohol or illegal drugs by the student
- Sharing any overly personal or financial information concerning yourself with the student; gossiping or making derogatory comments about PCA, its administration, faculty and employees to the student

- Sharing or disclosing any information concerning the student to any person not specifically authorized to receive such information, including, but not limited to, information concerning educational assessments, test scores, grades, behavior, mental or physical health, and family background or finances
- Performing back rubs on the student
- Kissing the student
- Touching the student frequently
- Commenting on the student's body or appearance in a sexual manner or sexually suggestive manner
- Exchanging romantic gifts or communication with the student
- Showing obscene or suggestive photos to the student
- Videotaping or photographing the student in revealing or suggestive poses
- Making sexual jokes, gestures and innuendos or engaging in inappropriate banter of a sexual nature with the student
- Sharing your own sexual exploits or marital difficulties
- Intentionally invading a student's privacy
- Secretive behavior with the student

To the extent that you have any questions or concerns about anything regarding your international student or their behaviors, you should speak with the International Homestay Coordinator.

### **Guidelines for Modesty/Behavior**

As with displays of affection, there are differences among cultures regarding what constitutes modesty and seductive behavior. The following guidelines apply to American culture for both students and adults:

#### **Modesty**

- No contact between adults and student while either is wearing only undergarments
- Bathrobes or housecoats should be worn over sleepwear
- No suggestive or revealing clothing
- Student must strictly adhere to school dress code

#### **Behavior**

- Absolutely no flirting between adults and students
- No language or jokes with sexual connotations
- Absolutely no dating, romantic or sexual behavior with a student

Your student will receive these guidelines prior to his or her arrival at your home, so he or she should act appropriately. However, if you have concerns about how your student demonstrates affection, or with his or her modesty or behavior which may be perceived as seductive, speak with him or her directly. If you are unable to resolve the problem, contact the International Homestay Coordinator. In the unfortunate event that your student indicates that some other individual is inappropriate with him or her, you must contact the International Homestay Coordinator immediately.

### **Guidelines for Showing Affection**

Plymouth Christian Academy encourages healthy, appropriate expressions of affection between our host families and international students. However, it is important to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate forms of affection. Due to cultural differences, this distinction is not always clear.

Although each culture differs somewhat in what is acceptable versus unacceptable when displaying affection, the following forms of affection are considered to be acceptable in American culture:

- Brief hugs upon greeting or parting
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High fives” or “fist bumps”
- Holding hands during prayer

The following forms of affection are examples of inappropriate behavior between host parents or other adults and students:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Adult holding hands with student
- Kisses on the mouth or lips
- Student sitting on the lap of an adult
- Touching bottoms, chest or genital areas
- Showing affective in isolated areas such as bedrooms or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with the student for any purpose
- Touching knees or legs
- Wrestling, tickling or piggyback rides
- Any type of massage
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) by an adult to student that relate to physique or body development
- Giving gifts or money to the student (except Christmas, birthday, etc.)
- Private meals in an intimate environment

## **TRAVEL AND SCHOOL BREAKS**

### **Travel with your Student**

If you plan to travel with your student, you must notify PCA of your scheduled trip in advance. You may not travel internationally (includes Canada and Mexico).

### **Christmas, Spring Break and Summer Break**

We strongly encourage international students to travel home for Christmas break because of the high value we place on the relationship with the student and his/her home family. Even a 10-day to 2-week break is very helpful to the student’s cultural and psychological adjustment and is recommended very highly by Plymouth Christian Academy.

Having stated this strong preference for travel home, PCA does allow international students to stay in the U.S. for Christmas if the host family agrees. Those students who are under a host agency can make reservations to stay at their facility if desired during Christmas or Spring break. This usually requires at least a month's notice and there is a cost for the student.

Students are required to go home every summer to reconnect with their families. This travel is the financial responsibility of the international student's family. The host family is expected to take the student to and from the airport for travel home. Students need permission from the International Homestay Coordinator to travel outside of the travel dates listed in the enrollment contract.

## **EMERGENCIES**

### **Emergency Procedures**

Please make sure that your student knows what to do in an emergency in your home. This includes having phone numbers of your family members and trusted neighbors and understanding how to call 911.

As a host family, you should contact the International Homestay Coordinator any time there is an emergency or crisis regarding your student. This includes situations such as medical emergency, fire in the home, lost student, or health issues of the student such as an eating disorder or other illness.

### **Lost Student**

- Contact the police if necessary
- Contact the International Homestay Coordinator

## **CONTACT INFORMATION AND WHERE TO GO FOR HELP**

### **Chain of Communication**

If you have a problem or simply want to ask a question, your first point of contact is the International Homestay Coordinator. If you are unable to resolve the problem with her, your next point of contact would be Caryn Huntsman, Superintendent.

### **24/7 Support**

Whenever possible, contact the International Homestay Coordinator during school hours. Emergency support is available to our international students and host families 24/7.

### **Contact Information**

International Homestay Coordinator  
Leanne Windle  
Work: 734-459-3505 x 3190  
Cell: 734-306-1121

Superintendent  
Caryn Huntsman  
Work: 734-459-3505 x 3131

Education Specialist Director  
Julie Bottorff  
Email: [Julie.bottorff@plymouthchristian.org](mailto:Julie.bottorff@plymouthchristian.org)

***Thank you for taking the time to read and understand the Host Family Handbook. We hope it helps you prepare for welcoming your student and having an enjoyable experience for you, your family and your student.***

***What a privilege to serve our God in this way!***

## International Student Host Family Job Description

**Job Title:** International Student Host Family

**Department:** International Student Program

**Reports To:** Leanne Windle, International Homestay Coordinator; Caryn Huntsman, Superintendent

Plymouth Christian Academy began accepting international students in the Fall of 2016. Your role serving as a host family is one of the most important components of this program. Plymouth Christian views you as professional partners in the international student's education, serving as part of a team with the parents in the home country, teachers, students, church family and administration. We depend on your loving care, parental discernment and confidential, professional communication with the school as we educate these students and bring them up in a Christian context. It is important that the host family and teachers view each child as a unique creation of God and seek to aid the student in developing his/her gifts and abilities to their highest potential based on a proper understanding and acceptance of himself/herself and how God has made them. (Psalm 139:13, 14)

**Qualifications:** We are looking for the following characteristics in you and your family as we together consider this role for your family.

- You have a growing personal relationship with Christ.
- You are able to demonstrate a healthy marriage.
- You are able to handle and resolve conflict.
- You are willing to admit if you've made a mistake.
- You are financially responsible.
- Your children in the home are doing well academically, socially and spiritually.
- You are willing to learn and respect others and other cultures

**Expectations:** We have made a commitment to the international student's parents to carefully screen and match students with our school families. We have also assured them that we would have on-going communication with the host families for enhanced understanding of cultural learning and academic, emotional and spiritual support in the home. Therefore, we expect the host families to follow our expectations. Specifically, host parents are responsible to:

- Provide a safe and healthy home environment
- Provide emotional and spiritual support
- Be involved in a church family and attend church weekly
- Support the student as they learn and adjust to American culture. Simultaneously, learn about their culture in a respectful manner.

*Relational Capital – Get to know the student, what motivates them, how they are unique. Expect high standards from them. Build trust as quickly as possible. Catch them doing things right (different from a renter or boarder).*

- Provide intentional counsel with the student on choices of friends. International students might need help initiating friendships. Also, please discuss and monitor friend choices for honest, trustworthy friends who desire to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and who also seek to learn about the international student's culture, country and story.
- Discuss conflict resolution with your student. See them as having the potential to grow in interpersonal skills.
- Identify special needs of your student and be in dialogue with PCA regarding those needs.
- Work with the student to meet dietary preferences or needs, learning about their nutrition in their home country and occasionally preparing common foods from their country.
- Provide accountability and discipline when necessary. Know where your student is at all times and monitoring their choice of friends.
- Provide academic support and accountability. Help them as they learn proper communication strategies with American teachers and communicate with teachers alongside them as needed.
- Fill out monthly evaluation and submit to agency/PCA Homestay Coordinator.
- Discuss any challenges in any area with the International Homestay coordinator throughout the year.
- Model a healthy marriage relationship within the home.
- Work alongside other host families to develop common guidelines when possible. Coordinate with each other for time off as needed.
- Be positive regarding the home environment of each host family. Each home will be different. Be careful to build up other host homes if comparisons are made in conversation at your home.
- Maintain standards in the home that fall within the school's acceptable range, to insure consistency and positive student morale.

**Responsibilities** include the following:

**Summer:**

- Attend host family orientation meeting
- Research a little on your student's country before they arrive. [www.asiasource.org/profiles](http://www.asiasource.org/profiles) is a great resource for Asian countries and [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) is a good source for current events.
- Prepare room for host student(s); each student needs a separate bed and desk.

**The first week with your host student:**

- Visit the grocery store and a Target type store together and if possible and an ethnic food store

- Establish a place and list for the student to add items to the grocery list during the week
- Establish household standards for garbage, bathrooms, laundry and assign chores
- Gently help insist they stay awake until 8PM so their sleep patterns adjust to the US time zone
- Establish a weekly/daily family devotional time- devotion led by parent and prayer requests, family business can be shared/ discussed
- Watch an American movie (and a movie from their culture if possible) to talk about cultural differences

**Daily:**

- Provision of breakfast, dinner and a packed lunch (or they can purchase their own meal card with their own funds)
- Transportation to and from PCA with host parent or host sibling or approved car pool
- Academic support and emotional check-how the day went, concerns, etc.
- Note: International students typically will spend twice as much time as an American student on academics in the evening. So, the average international student should be allowed to do up to 4 hours of homework a night. This means that after co-curricular involvement, a student may complete homework up to 10:30 or 11 each night
- Provide the opportunity for the student to use the internet for at least 30-60 minutes per evening. If a student is struggling academically, limiting usage to 30 minutes is recommended.

**Weekly:**

- At least 3 cooked dinners together with the family with some informal “how are you doing” conversation
- Family devotion time weekly or daily
- Review between student and host parent on use of time during the past week; sleep habits, internet usage, etc.
- Look ahead to next week and confirm plans around anything unusual
- Weekly church attendance
- Check parent portal for any missing homework or academic issues

**Monthly:**

- Complete monthly report to agency and/or International Homestay Coordinator

## **Family Covenant**

Welcome to our Family! Our family believes in The Bible and loves God and others. We will treat you like one of our own children, but also as a guest in our home and country. We enjoy spending time together as a family for meals. We also enjoy sharing new experiences with you. We believe that this exposes you to our American culture and helps you to learn English better. We will show love and respect for you and would ask that you do the same for us. Please come to us if there is something you need as you would with your own family. We are more than happy to help with school work or problems or to take you places that you need or want to go. We want you to know that we are always available for you if you have a need or are just missing your home. We want you to feel safe and comfortable in our home and like a part of our family!

These are expectations we have while living in our home:

1. Household chores: We will encourage our student to participate in household chores such as keeping their room neat and clean; helping with their own laundry; picking up after themselves; helping our other children with the weekly garbage and helping with meals and dishes.
2. Household items: We want our student to become familiar with proper usage of items such as television, appliances, etc. before using them independently.
3. Communication and attitude: We believe that proper communication and a respectful attitude towards one another is vital in a loving family. We want our student to have open communication with us in regard to school work, upcoming school projects, things that we may need to help with, etc. If our student wants to make plans with friends, we ask that they check with us first to make sure our schedule works with theirs. Knowing early about needed school supplies, church activities, or plans with friends is very important.
4. Punctuality: We will expect our student to get themselves up and be ready for school each day and church on Sundays in order to leave the house at a specific scheduled time. Bedtime will usually be no later than 11:00 p.m. on school nights since all family members have to get up early each morning.
5. Beliefs-We are a Christian family and we go to church on a regular basis. It is expected for you to attend church as the International Homestay Program requires, but you are welcome to go with us anytime. We ask that you respect our beliefs and do understand that you may have your own religious beliefs. We welcome questions about our beliefs.
6. Love and Respect-We ask that you respect us and we will love and respect you.
7. Internet and Social Media-You are welcome to use the Wi-Fi in our home for the internet and social media sites. However, we ask that you do not use the internet or social media for things like gambling, pornography or adult websites or post any pictures of yourself or others that are not appropriate or fully clothed. We also ask that you do not post any profanity on social media websites. There should be no phone, computer, or internet usage from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. unless special permission is given.
8. Clothing-We respect your ability to show your personality through your clothing choices, but ask that clothing be modest and not have profanity or inappropriate pictures on it.

We look forward to having you join our family. We want to make you feel loved, cared for, and to enjoy your experience here.

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Student Signature

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Family Signature