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Dear Host Family,

We would like to thank you for hosting a foreign high school student. He or she will become your son or daughter for several months, resulting in an experience of a lifetime for your family.

We hope that you find the information in this handbook helpful. It should answer many of the questions you may have and offer ways to overcome some of the difficulties of hosting. However, this book is only a guide.

We pray your family and your new son or daughter will have a wonderful, rewarding, and fun experience in international exchange.

We pray that as you invest in one student, you will grow to love and care for them as one of God's own.

Sincerely,



Robert Flamm
Administrative Principal

Arrival

- *Try to have a sense of humor and be understanding of your student during the initial adjustment period.*
- *Treat your student like family, not as a guest.*

The Initial Adjustment Period

The first few weeks of the program are an adjustment period for everyone. You have a new son or daughter with different habits, lifestyle, language, and customs. In addition, your new family member will be adjusting to an almost entirely new environment. Not only will customs, lifestyles, and language be new, but the student will also be arriving with preconceived notions of both the U.S. and Emmanuel Christian School. Every foreign visitor arrives with expectations of what the U.S. will be like, and these expectations rarely match reality. In addition, it may also be the first time the student has traveled outside his or her own country or so far away from home. The student's reaction to this adjustment period may include hesitation, moodiness, disappointment, criticism of the U.S. and/or Americans, boastfulness of his or her own country or family, or withdrawal. Every student reacts differently, so you and your family should try to have a sense of humor and be understanding of whatever form it takes.

One of the best ways to help your student overcome this period of adjustment is to learn more about his or her own

country. Ask questions about the student's family, friends, hometown, holidays, school, etc. This will not only help your new son or daughter overcome their initial period of discomfort, but will also help nurture the budding relationship between you and your student.

Remember, this period of adjustment will pass. During times of frustration, it is best to try to put yourself in your student's shoes and imagine things from his or her point of view.

Student Arrival

On the day of arrival, call the airline or airport to confirm the arrival time. If the student has made a connection in another city, check if the flight arrived on time and whether the student was able to make his or her connection. Plan to arrive at the airport early, and prepare for the excitement of meeting your student for the first time. If your airport is large or very busy, it may be a good idea to make a sign with your student's name on it. Although you may recognize your new son or daughter, he or she will probably have difficulty finding you in a crowd.

First impressions go a long way. Be happy and show excitement at your student's arrival. A welcome sign, balloons, or flowers are always warmly received. You may want to research the cultural background of your student so that you greet him or her appropriately.

Upon arrival at your home, encourage your student to make a telephone call to his or her natural parents to let them know he or she has arrived safely. Plan a quiet family day. Your new son or daughter will probably experience jet lag for two or three days, and he/she may only want to bathe and rest. In addition, informal meals are probably the best idea.

The First Few Days

In the first day or two introduce your student to your home. Include not only a tour of the rooms in your home, but also the operation of light switches, faucets, use of the bathroom (including towels, etc.), phone/stereo/TV (including any household rules), trash (especially important if certain items are recycled), and where the student should keep his or her personal belongings. Also, in the first few days, help your student orient your home in relation to the school, local shopping area, and other local places in which he or she may be interested.

Limit social introductions during the first few days to close friends and family. Short trips around the neighborhood will help orient your student. Don't forget your student will be tired and language strain will be high.

Your student may not know how to address you and may feel uncomfortable with "Mom" or "Dad." You and your student should discuss how to address one another, keeping in mind each other's potential discomfort with certain forms of address. Once again, communication is the key.

Communication

- *Communicate openly and often with your student.*
- *Speak clearly and use varied, simple vocabulary.*

Communication is the most important tool in a successful hosting experience. When a problem or misunderstanding arises, talk it over with your student immediately. This will often avoid having small cultural or other differences turn into major problems.

Your student has had English classes in school, perhaps for many years. However, his or her skills may be in reading, rather than speaking or listening. So, be patient and have a sense of humor. When you speak to your student, speak slowly and clearly. If your student does not understand, try using different vocabulary. Avoid using "baby" English and slang. If you find your student smiling and agreeing with you all the time, it is likely that he or she does not understand much of what you are saying. Try asking questions that need more than a "yes" or "no" to answer.

Take a moment to consider the communication style of your student's native culture. Asian students often refrain from sharing their feelings with others as it might negatively affect the relationship. Communication breakdown and misunderstandings occur often due to different communication styles.

If you would like to work on your foreign language skills with your student, please wait until after the strain of the first couple months has passed, and your student is speaking English smoothly.

The English Language

As we all know, learning a foreign language can be a daunting experience. Every language has its idiosyncrasies, and the English language is no exception. We hope you enjoy the following and gain a little understanding of what your student may be going through over the first few weeks.

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes; but the plural of ox became oxen not oxes. One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese, yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice; yet the plural of house is houses, not hice. If the plural of man is always called men, why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

If I spoke of my foot and show you my feet, and I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet? If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth, why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

Then one may be that, and three would be those, yet hat in the plural would never be hose, and the plural of cat is cats, not cose.

We speak of a brother and also of brethren, but though we say mother, we never say methren. Then the masculine pronouns are he, his, and him, but imagine the feminine, she, shis, and shim.

Let's face it - English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England. We take English for granted.

But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm goes off by going on.

If Dad is Pop, how come Mom isn't Mop?

Everyday Issues

Money

Host families are not expected to bear any financial burden beyond the necessities of food, housing, and normal family activities. Long-distance phone calls home or elsewhere should be limited and be made collect or with a phone card.

Your student should open a **separate** bank account or place money in a bank safety deposit box. Money should not be

left lying around your house. Nor should it be deposited in your bank account. When opening a bank account, the student should complete a W-8 form from the bank to verify his or her non-resident-alien status.

Personal Hygiene

Some students may have different cultural norms regarding personal hygiene. Let your student know your family's routines for maintaining personal hygiene. Be sure to show sensitivity and understanding while explaining your family's standards of hygiene.

Laundry

A discussion on your family's laundry routine should take place soon after your student's arrival. Show him or her where to put dirty clothes. If you want your student to do his or her own laundry, demonstrate the operation of your washer and dryer. Make sure that your student understands his or her responsibilities regarding laundry, including folding and putting away clothes.

Important Documents

Your student will have several items that will need to be put in a safe location. These include his or her passport and immigration papers, return airline ticket, and insurance information. Your student may want to keep them with his or her belongings, but it is recommended that you decide

with the student on a safe place to store these items. A lost passport or return ticket can be a headache for everyone.

Phone Usage

Please discuss phone usage rules in your household. Students need to limit phone calls both to and from family and friends at home to no more than **one hour total every two weeks. Make note of the time difference between home and foreign location.** Students who spend too much time chatting with friends and family from home have a much more difficult time adjusting to the U.S. and their host family. ECS supports friendly correspondence between host and natural families, but beware that misunderstandings may occur due to cultural differences and language barriers. Long-distance phone calls home or elsewhere should be made collect or with a phone card. One recommendation for a trusted online phone card company is www.OneSuite.com.

Social Life

Encourage your student to join in with American families and friends rather than seeking out other international students. Encourage him or her to join school clubs or sports teams and other teen group activities, such as a church youth group or local youth volunteer organizations. Invite a few teenagers from the high school and neighborhood to your home to meet your new son or daughter. This is especially important if you do not have teenagers in your home. Explain your family rules concern-

ing dating, curfew, and social activities. Keep in mind that your student could be used to very different cultural norms in regards to social interactions.

Internet Safety

The internet is a wonderful tool for the student to use for school work, keeping in touch with family and friends at home, and for entertainment. Many families who have computers at home set up rules for its use and for accessing the internet from home. Please feel free to set any rules you want. **Students who spend too much time on the internet or e-mailing family and friends at home have a much harder time adjusting to the U.S. and the host family.**

If your student spends time in his/her room alone on the computer multiple times a week, they are likely suffering from culture shock and adjustment issues.

Eating Habits

Eating habits are different in every culture. You and your family are certainly not expected to adjust your eating habits according to your new family member. However, we encourage you to be understanding for the first few weeks as your student makes adjustments to your eating habits. If the student is expected to prepare his or her own meal on occasion, explain how this should be done. Communicate whether meals are normally eaten together or on one's own in your household. If any meals are "on your own," we suggest you instruct the student in detail about how to do

this. Your student may not know how to use some kitchen appliances and may not know what food he/she should eat.

Your student may be interested in cooking a dish from his or her country for your family.

Transportation

In most countries, public transportation is the main means for local transportation, especially in bigger cities. Your student may feel frustrated due to less independence resulting from the lack of public transportation in the U.S. Do not let your family become a taxi service. Discuss transportation with your student before they become involved with after-school activities.

Religion

You should respect your student's religious beliefs and he or she should respect yours. Your student may want to attend religious services with you. We encourage, though do not require, students to attend services at least once with the family as a cultural and learning experience. Your student is **ABSOLUTELY NOT ALLOWED** to change religious affiliation while on the program. Discuss your faith and practices with your student. If your student wishes to attend services at another church, discuss pros and cons. Your decision should be respected.

Chores

Your student is expected to participate in the normal responsibilities of household chores, just as your own children would. You should discuss what is expected of him or her and explain how things are to be done.

Be sure to inspect what you expect so that adjustments can be made early in the experience.

Important Tips for Successful Hosting

Turn day-to-day tasks into chances to connect.

Involve your student in a way they may not even know can be fun, like participating in meal preparations. This can mean helping to plan dinner menus for the week, making grocery lists, and shopping for ingredients. When preparing dinner, have the student assist you. They can be a part of American life while learning new words and feeling involved, as well as learning their way around an American grocery store and kitchen. You might even be surprised with a meal idea from their country that you can make together!

Don't let little things turn into big things.

Most of the time, little concerns, questions, or challenges can be turned around before they escalate. Keep communi-

cation regular and open with your student; check in and stay on the same page. Try asking, "So how are things going for you?" This is to help you, too. We don't know there is a problem until someone tells us! And the longer problems go unattended, the worse they can get.

Do what it takes to get them out of their room.

When culture shock sets in, a typical reaction is for the student to begin to retreat to their room. Draw them out, give them tasks to help you with, include them in family discussions. They will begin to come out on their own, and it will ease the transition period.

Relax, smile, and enjoy the experience of a lifetime.

Culture Shock

The most exciting, rewarding, interesting, challenging, and sometimes frustrating aspect of the program for both host family and student is learning about cultural differences. These cultural differences will lead to what is called culture shock for the student. It arises in varying ways and at different times for each student, but they will ALL go through it.

Battle culture shock by encouraging your student to get and stay involved at school and in the community. The best way to overcome culture shock quickly is to stay busy.

What is Culture Shock?

The term *culture shock* was first used in the 1950's by an anthropologist as a way to describe the anxiety and disorientation felt by those living for an extended period of time in a cultural environment different from their own. It comes from the awareness that one's own values, perceptions, beliefs, and customs do not "fit" into the new environment. This awareness, in turn, leads to the anxiety and disorientation that are at the center of reactions to culture shock.

Everyone reacts to culture shock differently, but typical symptoms include: too much or too little sleep, lack of appetite or overeating, excessive crying, easily angered, criticism of the new culture and everything in it (family, school, country, people, etc.), irritability, and negativity. Very few students experience the extreme symptoms, but it is common for students to sleep a lot, or stay in their room for extended periods of time.

The Stages of Culture Shock

STAGE I - The Honeymoon:

After arrival in the U.S., most students show excitement and interest in all the new and different

aspects they find in the U.S. Everything is an adventure, and he or she is the center of attention.

STAGE II - Problems

The excitement wears off, your student is no longer the center of attention, and problems start to arise in all aspects of your student's life. He or she begins to see troubles in school, language, family, food, shopping, television - everything! The student may view everything with negative blinders, becoming critical about all around him or her.

STAGE III - Recovery:

Recovery begins as your student feels increasingly comfortable in the new environment. The fears and problems of the past are now gone, replaced by a feeling of comfort as the student begins to "fit in" to his or her new culture.

STAGE IV - Adaptation:

Your student has now fully recovered and feels comfortable and confident in the U.S.

STAGE V - Reverse Culture Shock:

Many students find that they become so adapted and comfortable to their new environment that when they go home they go through a form of culture shock again. This is known as *reverse culture shock*. Students expect to be able to return home and fit right in where they left off nearly a year before. However, once they arrive home they find that they

have changed and have to go through a period of adaptation to their home culture. This form of culture shock can be worse than Stage II, as it is entirely unexpected.

How to Overcome Culture Shock

There is no way to avoid culture shock. However, there are several things that can be done to help the student overcome it more rapidly. If he or she spends hours alone or feeling bored, this will only intensify the effects of culture shock. If you find your student exhibiting the symptoms described above, encourage him or her to get more involved, make friends, and keep busy. This is the best cure.

Notes About Schools in the U.S.

At a convenient time after your student arrives, he or she should visit school with the representative and/or the host family to become familiar with the surroundings and to select classes. Each student is required to take English. All other courses may be selected according to the student's needs in his or her own country, graduation requirements if applicable, recommendation of school counselor, or student's own interest. We recommend that the student take at least one nonacademic class (for example music, physical education, art, etc.), as the language strain is much less, and it is a way to meet other students with similar interests.

All students must be placed in the appropriate school grade assigned by the program and school, although courses may

be selected from any grade in consultation with school officials. Academics are an important part of the program. Students must do their best in school. A 2.0 (C) grade point average with no failing grades is required, or the student may be put on warning, probation, or released from the program and sent home.

It is normal for exchange students to feel "lost" during the first weeks of school. Most students do not understand the American school system, or anything that teachers are saying in class. This is to be expected. It takes anywhere from a few weeks to a few months to begin to think in English and to keep pace with the various speeds and accents of the speakers. Students should be relaxed and patient, and allow time to become acclimated. Students should NOT change classes due to the language difficulty.

Your student may not be familiar with the American system of homework. In the U.S., teachers regularly assign homework. This is not optional work, it must be done and returned to class as directed by the teacher. Teachers give grades for homework and these are included in the semester grade for the class. Homework not done, done poorly, or late is given a failing or low grade. Teachers normally understand if students have difficulty doing all the assigned work during the first few weeks of school. However, students must tell their teachers that they are having difficulty. Teachers will often offer extra help, but they can only help if they know the student is having trouble.

Americans often value effort more than result - if the student is doing his/her best, teachers may grade according to effort not result.

Students are expected to give service of their time and talent to the school. Every student should get involved in clubs, sports teams, or take a class that utilizes a special interest or talent. This is part of the program experience, and a great way to meet people and make friends.

