**Common Objections from Potential Host Families and**

**Talking Points to Overcome These Objections**

􀀀 Our family is too busy.

Busy families are the best families.

􀀀 Our family never does anything. We’re kind of boring.

Some of the kids are quiet and studious and have a low energy level.

􀀀 We don’t have any children at home.

 Many kids thrive on relationships with adults. We would choose a special child for your situation, and we would want to choose one with some natural activities to help them form friendships

􀀀 We have too many children.

Some students love to be in a busy active household, and after you have three children in the home, what does one more matter? They all have to help out anyway. We have had

many host families with 6 or 8 children even.

􀀀 Our children are too young.

Younger children are the most enthusiastic and loving host siblings. How can the exchange student be homesick with them around? They get the most out of the experience, and they are far less judgmental than they will be as teens.

􀀀 We don’t have a separate room.

The kids can share rooms with a same-sex host sibling. Or some host families have made other arrangements such as converting a den, or a dining room, or a basement.

􀀀 Both parents work.

In most of our host families, both parents work. You manage to care for your own children, right? You need to give chores, responsibilities, instructions. Many of the kids have working parents at home and are used to such responsibilities.

􀀀 We wouldn’t be available to give rides right after school

Well, they’re not little children. If practice is over at 4, they can do their homework at school until being picked up an hour later. Or they can be given the skills to start finding rides on

their own too.

􀀀 It’s too much extra work.

The kids should be given responsibilities: helping make dinner, doing their laundry, yard work, etc. Teach them that as family members, we all do kindnesses for each other. The

American principles of give-and-take. They can even SAVE you time by playing with younger children or helping get dinner started, folding laundry, etc.

􀀀 My kids might be jealous

That’s true. So it’s important to select kids where there are not too many areas of direct competition between them. Sometimes it’s wise to have one older and one younger.

􀀀 I don’t have time.

Well, none of us seem to have time before we have children. It may seem like work before they come, but nobody can tell you in advance how much you’re going to love them.

They will get busy in their own lives. The first weeks are busy as you help them adjust, but later, they will be immersed in their lives at school and activities.

􀀀 Scared about drinking, drugs, sex

The kids experiment with these things less than American teens. They understand that they need to follow YFU and family rules, and they know there will be consequences if they don’t. If you asked our current host families their biggest complaints about the kids, it would not be these things. It would be normal parenting issues such as: He spent too much time on the computer.

􀀀 We tend to be very strict with our kids.

Great! YFU expects host parents to set limits, and so do their natural parents back home! What do you consider being strict? Probably your guidelines are appropriate and helpful to the kids.

􀀀 I don’t have teenagers. I don’t know what rules to give them.

We can help with that. In fact, we will have an orientation meeting in the summer where we help you with those concerns. The host family handbook also gives some useful guidelines.

􀀀 Don’t have an extra car for them to drive

They don’t drive!

􀀀 We can’t afford it financially.

The kids bring their own spending money and good health insurance. They HAVE parents-- -they’re not orphans. Those parents pay for thenew winter boots and the booster club

dues, etc. They generally get a couple hundred dollars a month for their own expenses. You do provide food and a place to live, but the most important things you provide are

non-financial: encouragement, guidance, support, love to help them through the experience.

􀀀 We never go anyplace.

It is not your job to take them sight-seeing or on tourist-type trips. This is a “family-living experience.” YFU will offer some chaperoned trips that they can sign up for at their

parent’s expense. But honestly, the things that the kids remember best ten years down the road are not the tourist experiences but the simple real-life ones: learning to make soup from host mom, playing basketball in the driveway with the family, decorating for the holidays.

􀀀 We are going on an expensive vacation and can’t afford one more person

What most of our host families do in that case is say to their student: “We’re going to Colorado or Florida or whatever and your share of the ski lift tickets/Disney tickets/etc.

would be $600 or $300. Are your parents comfortable with that? If not, we can arrange for you to stay home with another host family or a volunteer or family friends.”

􀀀 We may not be in town in August when they arrive

That happens every year. Probably 20% of the kids get house-guested upon arrival with another host family or a volunteer or someone else. We work that out all the time.

􀀀 It would be weird having a stranger in our home.

For the first few days, it may feel a little weird, but these are KIDS! This is not like entertaining a visiting head-of-state! You need to relax and go back to normal life. Sometimes, the house will be messy or dinner is late getting on the table or there is a family argument. But soon, you stop walking around on egg shells and become a family.

􀀀 What would we do if there were an emergency?

YFU is just a phone call away and has years of experience dealing with various issues that might come up. Your area rep (and other volunteers and staff) are also ready to help out as necessary. We have found temporary places for the kids, if necessary, on a hour or

two’s notice.

􀀀 Our house is too messy.

A cluttered home is a busy home, but if it’s basically clean, that’s fine. We know that hosting is a real-life experience, not a photo shoot for HOUSE BEAUTIFUL. And these are kids. The most important thing is that you have an open heart.

􀀀 We don’t normally make fancy meals.

The kids aren’t going to a five-star hotel. You can make macaroni & cheese or frozen foods or whatever. The kids can also be expected to cook sometimes. Is there healthy food available in the house? That’s what would be expected.

􀀀 We regularly go to religious services and would want to make sure the student takes part

For many families, it’s a deal-breaker if the kids don’t participate in this family activity. Our students need to identify their plans about attending religious services on program. If they

agree to go as often as you do, they can be expected to attend once or twice a week. We will identify to you kids who plan to attend with you.

􀀀 Our teenager doesn’t want the responsibility of dragging another teenager around **(THIS IS FREQUENTLY AN UNVOICED OBJECTION!)**

That’s why you would encourage them each to have separate lives and activities and friends so they’re not always together. If your own child wants to go out Friday night with friends, they should not be forced to bring the exchange sibling along. Hopefully, they will often CHOOSE to, but the student needs to make their own way, with your help.

􀀀 It’s our child’s senior year, and they don’t want to share it.

Then, host a student who will be a junior and perhaps someone with very different interests, like natural siblings may have.

􀀀 What if our child of the opposite sex becomes romantically interested?

They will be “brothers and sisters” and you need to refer to them that way from the very beginning. When they see each other’s dirty socks lying on the floor, they quickly lose their mystique. The normal behavior is teasing between them.

􀀀 What if it just doesn’t work out?

Well, that’s why we’re constantly monitoring what is going on. You need to let us know your concerns while the problems are little ones to see if we can help work things out.

Many times, families become very concerned about little communication issues that later are solved. There will be good days and bad days, just as there are in normal families. But if we can’t solve the concerns, we would want to make a change and move the student, since in general, this is supposed to be a happy experience for all involved.

􀀀 We’re just not sure if this is for us. What if we’re not cut out to be a host family?

One good option is to consider an arrival placement or a three-month placement and then see if it’s working out.

􀀀 What if their English isn’t good enough?

We have a pretty good idea before they arrive how their English compares to other students. For some kids, it will take longer than others, but within a couple months, they’re usually able to understand most of what goes on at home. By the end of the year, they’re using slang with the rest of the teenagers.