



**YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING**  
**Intercultural Exchange Programs**

## **JANUARY SUPPORT TIPS**

Happy New Year from YFU! January can be a turning point for both students and families. While this is the midway point for many of your students, some students are preparing to leave after the fall semester, and others are just now arriving. Please remember to refer back to **August** and **September**'s support tips if you will be supporting a winter arrival student.

We hope these timely tips will provide you with the materials necessary to have comfortable and meaningful conversations during your monthly meetings. As always, thank you for the work you do, YFU could not exist without volunteers!

### **SUPPORT TIPS**

#### **JANUARY - THE TRANSITION MONTH**

January is the month to nudge students out of their comfort zone and set goals for the remaining months. Encourage students to be aware of their attitudes and how it affects their family interactions. In September, students may have jumped to set the table, but by January it may be difficult to get them out of their room for supper. As typical teens they may have become too comfortable and complacent. Even if students now feel a part of the family, they need to continue to show gratitude and think about how much time they are interacting with their family members.

#### **MID YEAR IN-PERSON CONTACT**

Your second in-person contact with your student and host family must take place no later than February. Make sure to take time to talk with each party separately in a private space. Remember, you must report to your SSM or Field Director if there are changes in the household composition (grandparents, adult children, or adult partners). This in-person contact serves as your required Area Rep contact for that month. If you have a winter arrival student, please make sure to meet in person within 2 weeks of their arrival.

#### **CONTACT SOONER, RATHER THAN LATER**

We recommend contacting host families and students early in the month of January. Why?

- With school vacations and family travel, in November and December, students have spent a lot of unstructured time with their families. Too much time together can make small issues grow into larger problems. It is important to find out about how they spent their holidays together, and about any possible problems which occurred over the holidays before they become too big to resolve.

- It is also important to contact them early, if your area holds January Mid-year orientations. You want to be able to work with each of the students to grow in the areas needed through this educational opportunity.

#### **MID-YEAR ORIENTATIONS**

**Mid-year orientations** are occurring this month. The new year is a chance for students and host families to step back and evaluate how things are going. Remind students to make plans to attend, as all YFU orientations are mandatory. Often you can find the orientation event information under "Upcoming events" in [my.yfu.org](http://my.yfu.org). Also, this is a good time for you to interact with your host families and students, face-to-face and in a fun environment, so even if you're not involved in the orientation, consider attending too.

#### **POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATIONS**

This is a reminder that Post-Arrival Orientations need to be offered to new semester students! If you are not trained to conduct a one-on-one orientation for your student, please contact your Field Director to help identify a trained volunteer. This orientation is mandatory for all students and host families.

#### **PRE-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION**

Please share this link with any host family who has not yet attended a Pre-Arrival Orientation. January 10th @12:00 pm. [attendeegototraining.com/rt/653173165122219265](http://attendeegototraining.com/rt/653173165122219265)

#### **GRADES - THIS YEAR COUNTS!**

How you respond to comments like "This year doesn't count for me" will dramatically impact (and we hope improve) your student's outlook on the remaining months on exchange. Remind your student that to the contrary this year counts for so much and that by putting forth their best effort they are showing respect for:

- YFU USA and all the work they put into finding you a

school and community to welcome you this year.

- Your Host Family by choosing to honor their values of hard work.
- Your School by not just observing but participating in an American high school. You need to be held to the same standards as your US high school peers. Take advantage of the classes offered here that you cannot take back home.
- Yourself - When you made the commitment to participate in an exchange year with YFU, you agreed to work for a minimum grade point average of a C. Investing your time well in school in the US helps you integrate back into studies upon your return home.
- Your choice to come on program will impact your entire future. Every moment and action counts! Attitude as well as grades.
- United States VISA Requirements - Lastly, remind students that their J-1 visa requires all YFU exchange students to be full-time students actively participating in a secondary school.

### **REPORT CONCERNS RIGHT AWAY!**

If a concern arises about a student, host family or school, you must inform your Support Service Manager (SSM) by email or phone. Timeliness is important in keeping small concerns from becoming big problems. As a reminder we have 24/7 on-call service available for emergency situations that cannot wait until the next business day: 1.800.424.3691. Please help us by reporting concerns right way.

### **OUT-OF-COUNTRY TRAVEL**

It is vitally important that any time out of country travel is planned, sufficient time is given in the planning stage to explore what may be needed as far as VISA or documents a country requires for entry. Travel requirements are ever changing and it is the responsibility of the family and student to find these out and comply.

**Travel Regulations to Mexico** - Students traveling, or planning to travel to Mexico must have a notarized statement from their natural parents to be able to enter into the country. Ensuring all entry requirements for student are met is the responsibility of the host parents. Notarized statements do not need to be submitted to YFU USA, but need to be carried with student's passports for review by Mexican customs officials when they cross the Mexican border or enter at a Mexican port.

### **REPLACEMENT FAMILIES**

Please take the extra effort to support our replacement families, who are new to the hosting experience. Often students who move host families start the culture shock

## **ADMINISTRATIVE**

### **NEW ARRIVALS**

It is required to meet the new student(s) in-person within the first two weeks on program. You must document the initial face-to-face contact in the first monthly contact report.

### **2ND SCHOOL CONTACT**

It is time to make your second school contact! You are representing the YFU community when you speak to school officials so take a moment to review the suggested School Contact questions to the right as well as page 16-17 in the **Volunteer Handbook**. Our goal is to make these high schools a part of our YFU community!

Your second school contact—in accordance with the school preferences—must be completed and reported in the Contact Report by February 28th, 2015!

### **STUDENT TRAVEL**

Talk with students about any trip plans they might have during the second half of their exchange. Remind students to check the requirements for permission on YFUs Permission to Travel form. Each District has YFU approved trips which they offer to YFU students. It's not too early to remind them that they may not plan an unchaperoned student travel during spring break.

### **END-OF-YEAR TRAVEL (CDRS)**

The deadline has passed for IS students & HFs to log into their HF account and choose their preferred return date among the group flights in June. At this point no more requests can be accepted on the HF account. Students will receive a letter in January notifying them of their return flight date assignment. This letter will also contain the instructions and forms needed to make a Change of Date Request (CDR). Details will be outlined in the Travel Department mailing in January.

process all over, therefore these host families need to know how to get help, what they should allow, or nip in the bud. Give them the information they need to be successful with this student who may have struggled in their last home.

### **HOST FAMILY SUPPORT ONLINE**

Has your host family checked out the "My Resources" section of the Host Family Interface on YFU's public website? Take a moment and show your host family this great resource. Also, this can give you an opening to talk to your host family about working on a 2015 application if they are considering hosting in 2015!

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

### FOR STUDENTS

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#### **How was the holiday experience? What did you most enjoy about the holiday experience? What holiday traditions did you share with your host family?**

Encourage students to focus on the positive experiences of the holidays. Host families put in much effort to make the season festive and fun. Therefore, host families can be disappointed and hurt when their efforts are not appreciated. Suggest to your student that hand written thank you notes to their host family and others are always greatly appreciated.

#### **Were you homesick? Were there any holiday disappointments?**

It is normal for students to miss their family and home during the holidays. If your student was homesick, try to determine if it was because of the holiday blues, or too much contact with home country (which should be monitored), or if it is an ongoing issue. If contact with home is continuing to be an issue, develop a plan with students to reduce contact to an acceptable amount of time. If you feel that a student is suffering from more than homesickness, and you are concerned about depression, make sure to contact your SSM right away.

#### **Have you been invited to and/or attended your Mid-Year Orientation?**

This orientation is mandatory for all YFU students. During Mid-Year Orientations, students and host families have the opportunity to discuss the exchange thus far and set goals for the remaining months. It is a time of reflection and discussion - your families and students do not want to miss out!

#### **If you could repeat the first part of your exchange, what would you do differently? Knowing this, what do you plan to do differently in the last half of your exchange year?**

January is a perfect time to be proactive and to make a plan for the remainder of the year. Students may have gotten off track over the holidays, and having a plan and recording progress can help them get back on track and make their goals into a reality. You may wish to use this quiz to help student identify goals for the remainder of the year.

#### **What do you plan to do from now until you leave to show appreciation to your host family and others?**

Many students get comfortable and complacent at this time in their exchange year. Encourage students to think about ways they can show gratitude by giving back. They could volunteer to speak to a community group, work at a food bank, etc. Encourage students to personally thank people who have made an extra effort to contribute to their year's success.

### FOR FAMILIES

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#### **How was your holiday celebration? What holiday traditions did you share with your student? Did your student share any of their traditions with your family?**

Let the host family know that you recognize the holiday season can be fun and, at times, stressful. Holiday traditions vary, and hopefully students shared their holiday traditional activities with their host family. If your host family expresses frustration with their exchange student, listen and encourage the family to focus on positive events over the holidays.

#### **In your opinion, how is your student doing? Are there any signs of homesickness?**

Allow your host family to share their good and disappointing stories about the holidays. Reassure them that some homesickness is normal around the holidays. Students who spent too much time on online with friends back home may have exacerbate the problem. Assess if a student was homesick because of the holiday blues, too much contact with home (which should be monitored,) or if it is an ongoing issue.

#### **Have you received any information about the Mid-Year (or Post-Arrival) orientation?**

Mid-Year Orientation, like all the other orientations, is mandatory for students and strongly encouraged for host family. Let

the host family know that this orientation provides critical information for the next six months and is a great time for family reflection and goal setting.

New students required to have a Post-Arrival Orientation. And new host families are required to attend a Pre-Arrival Orientation or the Post-Arrival with their student.

**This is a mid-year check-in to see how you are feeling about your family’s YFU experience thus far.**

It is important to check in with the host family during this time, especially if they do not plan to attend the mid-year orientation. If your host family is not attending the mid-year orientation, it could be very beneficial for you to do these three short activities with your host family: **Mid Year Check-In**, **Adjustment Curve** and **Goal Setting**.

## **FOR SCHOOLS**

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**Has the student’s attendance at school been satisfactory?**

YFU must make sure that all students attend school daily. Excused absences are limited to illness or YFU approved travel with host parents. This school contact is an excellent opportunity to verify your students’ good attendance records.

**Have there been noticeable gains in the student’s grades, English speaking or social skills? Are they participating in extra curricular activities?**

In addition to reviewing grades, discuss other progress your student has made throughout the last semester. Social skills, class participation and other indicators can illustrate his/her place in the community.

*“YFU is incredibly grateful to all your teachers and staff who have supported our students throughout these past four months. YFU would love the opportunity to continue to work with your school in the fall by placing more students at your school.”*

**How many exchange students from YFU could your school accept?**

It is vital that YFU USA maintains relationships with hosting schools year to year. School retention is essential to a successful placement year. If you know that a difficult student may be influencing the school’s decision to accept future YFU students, address the issue without violating confidentiality or getting too deeply involved in support issues. Inform your Field Director the feedback you receive from school.

If you have any questions about Monthly Contacts, **please contact your Support Service Manager!**