



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

OCTOBER SUPPORT TIPS

Fall continues and YFU students have been here for at least one month and are adjusting in their own ways to American life. Host families are creating new routines and dynamics to accommodate a new family member. By now, you should have met with your students and host families in person at least once, and hopefully they are learning to trust you as their YFU rep.

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

HOMESICKNESS MONTH

The excitement has worn down and routines have begun. Homesickness and delayed culture shock is common in these initial months. Symptoms to watch for include:

- Isolation—not socializing, staying in their room;
- Excessive sleep;
- Lack of or too much appetite;
- Crying, expressing no energy;
- Continuing daily or too much contact with friends & family back home.

A little homesickness is natural. However, if the student's homesickness is affecting their ability to integrate into the school and host family, contact your SSM.

WELCOME/ARRIVAL PLACEMENT TIPS

Repping a student and host family in a welcome or arrival placement situation presents a unique set of considerations. Get in-depth tips on the **Arrival Placement Support**, on how to help students and host families through this time. Once the student is moved into the PERM family, another SEE visit is required within 60 days.

LATE ARRIVAL STUDENTS

If you are repping a late arrival student, keep in mind their delay in the adjustment curve. Please remember to perform an in-person visit within two weeks of their arrival.

STRUGGLING IN SCHOOL

It can help if the student has reviewed vocabulary that might

come up during that lesson. This could be found in their textbook, or by asking their teacher if there are any key words they could be studying for each topic/section. Vocabulary is critical to understanding, and knowing key terms will help them become more successful students.

LANGUAGE STRUGGLES DISGUISED AS ADAPTATION STRUGGLES

A fair number of students still struggle with using English for all their daily tasks. Sometimes it is not as obvious as the student not understanding certain words or phrases, but it surfaces as an adaptation issue.

Using a different language 24/7 can make teenagers overly tired and school work is likely to take longer because it is in a non-native language – this may lead to the student withdrawing from family activities, “excessive” sleepiness or a high level of frustration.

When one of your host families tells you they are not happy with their student's adaptation process, make sure to explore the language dynamic in the problem. Please email your SSM right away, if your student is still struggling in English.

POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATIONS

October is the month for Post-Arrival Orientations. Remind your students that they are required to attend. If a student's family cannot go, please help the student network with others to find a ride through a carpool. Otherwise we ask you to find a volunteer to conduct a one-on-one orientation for any student who does not attend a Post-Arrival Orientation.

WANTING TO MOVE

As this is the month for homesickness, it is also common to hear students say they want to move to another host family before seeking resolutions within their placement. Many are in contact with other YFU students, compare their different

experiences and feel that they would be happier in another home. Some students are tempted to request help from fellow YFU friends to find a new host family.

Remind your student that a move is the last resort and cannot happen without YFU's involvement, mediation, and evaluation. Please encourage your student to remain motivated and positive to have a successful year with your available support and help.

REPORT CONCERNS RIGHT AWAY

If a concern arises about a student, host family or school, you must inform your Support Services Manager (SSM) by email or phone. Timeliness is important in keeping small concerns from becoming big problems. Write your SSM an email as a "heads up" on an issue, even if you think you have solved the issue or the issue will not worsen.

YFU has 24/7 phone assistance available for medical and legal emergencies that cannot wait until the next business day: 1.800.424.3691.

STUDENT TRAVEL REQUESTS

Remind families and students to read over the **permission to travel** document and to submit the accompanying form for all travel more than 2 nights, at least two weeks before the trip. If they plan to go on vacation outside of the U.S. with their student (including Canada and Mexico) it is mandatory that exchange students have a multi-entry US visa and then mail their original DS-2019 and get it approved by the YFU USA national office in Washington, DC before finalizing vacation plans. If you, your student or host families have any questions regarding this issue please contact your SSM.

CELL PHONE, COMPUTER & SOCIAL NETWORKING

Students' contact with their natural families and friends should be decreasing. Review YFU's **Cell Phone Guidelines**, **Computer Guidelines** and **Social Networking Safety Tips**, with your students and host families if they report problems. These are all published in their Host Family Handbook and Passport to the USA.

CONTACT REPORT GUIDELINES

This training piece, **Reporting and Documentation Tips for Area Reps**, explains the purpose and ideal content for a monthly Contact Report versus just emailing your SSM. If you have not read the new guidelines, please take a moment to learn more by reading the **Updates to the Monthly Contact Reports!**

HOST FAMILY RESOURCES - PROMOTE

Has your host family checked out the "My Resources" section of their online account? They can find links to all of the above resources along with other helpful forms and tools in their online account by signing in to **yfuusa.org** and clicking on "My Resources".

ADMINISTRATIVE

GATHER STUDENT CELL PHONE

YFU asks that you collect your student(s)' cell phone number and add it into my.yfu.org. Also, you might want to help make sure that their voicemail is set up.

YFU POLICIES/DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES

Remind families and students what activities are not covered by insurance by reviewing YFU's **Dangerous Activities** form located in the Host Family Interface.

SCHOOL CONTACT

Fall has arrived and October is the month for your first school contact report. Help us develop and nurture the YFU-school relationship. Be sure to let them know about the hundreds of full and partial scholarships YFU has available for their American students to study abroad. Check out the list of **National Scholarships** for more information or call 1.800.TEENAGE to speak with an Admissions Counselor.

YFU STUDENT INSURANCE PACKET

Please confirm that the host family and student have received their Insurance Information Packet in the mail. If they have not yet received this, please let your SSM know. Also, make sure that they know where to access information about their **insurance online**.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

FOR STUDENTS

Did you go to your Post-Arrival Orientation (or when do you plan to go)? What was the best part? Did you set goals with your host family? What are they?

Talk with your students about the different sessions presented at the orientation. If you (as an Area Rep) weren't at the orientation ask the orientation coordinator in your area for what was covered or check out a sample schedule on the **Post-Arrival Orientation Website**.

If your student did not attend the orientation, you or another YFU volunteer must conduct a one-on-one orientation with the student, complete the **one-on-one checklist report** and file it with the district office. This orientation is required for YFU to remain in compliance with Department of State regulations, particularly the information about "Not With Me" sexual abuse prevention training.

What do you do on a typical evening or weekend with your host family? What are you doing to become part of your host family?

Rather than asking your students directly how things are going with their host families (they are likely to say 'good') you can listen to the stories to get a pretty clear picture of how things are going. Don't forget to provide an opportunity for students to express positive and negative sentiments - it is natural that they have both. The students need an appropriate and supportive outlet in the United States. Becoming part of a host family takes time, effort and patience.

Particularly after Post-Arrival Orientations, some students have the "grass is greener" symptom and feel as if their host families are not "up to par" with other students' host families. Help them understand that each family is different and that it is up to them to adapt to their host families. Students can invite their host families to do what students are interested in, rather than waiting for the host families to initiate all the time.

Have you been feeling "down"? What makes it worse? What makes you feel better?

Homesickness is normal, and common in the month of October. However, make sure the students are taking steps to move forward. Students can't be in present in the U.S., if they are in constant contact with home. Students need to minimize frequent communications with folks from home. If this is a problem, suggest that students log their contact with home, notice how often they are online with their folks from home, and how they feel afterwards. Students who spend time meeting new people and experiencing new things adjust more rapidly. Check out the Horizons pamphlet about **"Two Cultures Together: The Adjustment Process"** for more information on student adjustment.

Is there anything about your host family or their home that you did not expect or that you want to talk about? What impact do you think social media is playing on your exchange experience?

Now that some dust has settled, it might be helpful to simply remind your students that you are their YFU Area Rep and your role is to support them throughout their exchange. They should contact you if they ever feel uncomfortable, confused or need to talk. Let students know the best way to contact you: phone call, text, email or Facebook.

FOR FAMILIES

How has your new son/daughter become part of your family's routines and activities?

Going into the second month, it is critical that exchange students are beginning to find their place in the family. A family is much like a mobile, with each family member being an integral part that allows the mobile to be in perfect balance. When a new piece is added (the exchange student) other parts need to shift in order to find balance again. These changes can be harder for some family members than for others. Everyone is making adjustments, including exchange students who are experiencing new foods, new climate, new language, new environment, new friends, etc.

Has your new son/daughter shown signs of homesickness or culture shock?

All students will have some homesickness, and it can also have an impact on the host family. Some host families feel hurt - that all of their efforts to make the new son/daughter feel a part of the family are not appreciated. Reassure your host family that these are very natural emotions for all exchange students and it doesn't reflect on the host family. Learning how to do things like preparing a meal or helping with chores helps to lessen culture shock and will make students feel more successful and included in the host family. Also, working to involve students in activities and organizations in order to help them to get out, to get active, and to meet new people helps reduce feelings of homesickness. Then check on how much contact the exchange student has with home. Students who are in constant contact with their natural parents and friends from home have a harder time adjusting.

Have you received any feedback from your student's teachers or other school officials about his/her progress? How much time does your new son/daughter spend on homework?

Gather a feel for how active your host families are in their students' academic life. Do they feel overwhelmed by helping their new son/daughter with homework? Do they know if their student is struggling or successful with English at school? Or does it seem that they take more of a hands-off approach? No answer is incorrect, just informative. In the end, it is the responsibility of the student to keep up with their academic studies. If student is struggling or failing in classes, inform your Support Services Manager.

Has anything in your family or home setting changed (such as someone moving in, job change, renovations)?

It is important for YFU to know if new people are in the home or if the environment has changed significantly. If there is any significant change, such as a new person in the house, please contact your SSM right away.

FOR SCHOOLS

How are your YFU students, (name the students), acclimating to their new classes and extra-curricular activities?

Be sure that the school knows YFU offers language support to our students. If it sounds like your student needs additional language learning support, contact your Support Services Manager (SSM). YFU offers three language support options: tutoring, Rosetta Stone and the Oxford Picture Dictionary. [Click here](#) for more information on each of these.

YFU offers hundreds of full and partial scholarships to American teenagers. We would like to thank your school by making a customized presentation to your students about available scholarships. Is this a possibility?

It is very easy to see all of the [scholarships and qualifications](#) on YFU's public website at yfuusa.org.

Letting schools know that we would like to invite their students to apply for our scholarships is our way of thanking them for accepting our international students for the year. It also provides an opportunity for a 360-degree international exchange experience for the school. Show your school contacts the [YFU's Educator information](#) link on the website! You could also share, via email or by printing, the [National Scholarship Flyer](#).

International Education Week is next month (Nov. 16-20, 2015). How would they like YFU students to share their culture and give back to the school?

You might suggest writing an article and submitting a picture for the school newspaper, or preparing a presentation. Be sure to talk to your YFU students about planning to contribute to the school's celebration. YES or CBYX students may wish to use this opportunity as part of their required community service hour.

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