



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

## **FEBRUARY SUPPORT TIPS**

February may be a short month but full of national and cultural holidays - such as Black History Month, Valentines Day and President's Day. We hope these timely tips provide materials 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 like you!

### **SUPPORT TIPS**

#### **CONTACT FORMER HOST FAMILIES**

YFU asks that Area Reps contact any host family whose time hosting ended prematurely to help maintain the YFU-Host family relationship. If you are uncertain about making this contact, please check with your SSM how best to proceed.

Even if the student moved from the family weeks or months ago, this important contact provides YFU support and appreciation to the families who may still feel some anger and loss. YFU thanks for opening their home to a student is significant to this relationship.

Remind families that no matter how long they were in their student's life, they contributed and will be appreciated long after the exchange ends.

#### **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

In the US, Valentine's Day is not only reserved for couples—let your student know about the American tradition of sending Valentine cards to close friends and family members. A heartfelt card is an excellent way for them to thank their host family, teachers and others! Check out the following websites for ideas, how-to's and inspiration.

##### **Valentine's Day Card Ideas**

##### **Do It Yourself Valentine's Cards**

##### **Clever Crafting Valentine's Cards**

#### **WINTER DOLDRUMS, POST-HOLIDAY LETDOWN, AND CABIN FEVER**

With the weather still cold and school day cancellations — this is a time of year for cabin fever. There is lack of energy and enthusiasm which can prompt depression. People forced to stay in close proximity for long periods of time tend to find others annoying and might complain and say unkind things.

Encourage your students to try new activities or sports to get them going again. Help them recognize this for what it is, and get out of the house! A new activity can be a wonderful antidote for the winter blues.

#### **ENGLISH FOR FUN!**

Students might start feeling their English is stuck at a plateau. Reading English books, magazines, etc. for pleasure is a great way for students to improve their language skills. Local libraries offer these free materials. Encourage students to read out loud to improve their pronunciation.

#### **SUPPORT SKILLS C FOR AREA REPS**

We know that adults love to learn. Take your support to the next level by signing up for a **Support Skills C** (optional) training. This session is designed to assist Area Reps in understanding the support process, seeing problems as opportunities for student and host family growth, learning from experience, and understanding the critical role of the Area Rep in student and host family support. **Register today** for one of our upcoming live webinars.

#### **REPORTING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

There are situations that need to be reported within 24 hours to the Department of State (DOS). Examples are any actual or alleged violation of a sexual nature; any arrests of a student, host family or Area Rep; and any incident that may become a negative news story;...etc.

When in doubt, please report your concern your SSM. If need be, they will pass the concerns onto the Support Department at YFU's National Office. This team files an Incident Report with the Department of State (DOS) to allow DOS to monitor the situation and, be involved as early as possible. This way DOS stays informed and contributes to the support process for CBYX, YES and Flex students on DOS scholarships. Updating DOS with latest information strengthens the support process. Thank you for your help in quickly reporting to the Department of State!

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

### FOR STUDENTS

#### **What goals did you set at your Mid-Year orientation? How do you plan to achieve those goals?**

At Mid-Year Orientations, students and host families discuss the exchange so far and set goals for the remaining months. Take some time to discuss their goals and plans, as executing them can be key to having a successful completion of the exchange year. For example, encourage students to try a new activity or sport.

It is not uncommon to slump during the winter doldrums, and a new activity can be a wonderful antidote for the winter blues.

#### **Did you receive information about your return travel plans? Have you discussed your travel dates and plans with your host family and natural family?**

It may seem early, but it is important to go over, in detail, what the YFU Travel Department has arranged. See End-of-The-Year Travel under the Administrative section in this document.

#### **How are you doing in school? What grades do you expect? What classes are you taking this term? How many hours are you spending on homework?**

Some students feel that their school progress doesn't matter, but they are expected to maintain a C average and passing grades. Remind students that they will not be able to participate in many fun activities (including YFU trips) and events if their grades are below a C average.

Regardless of upward or downward changes in grades, always acknowledge positive aspects of school involvement. Praise students for the areas which they have worked hard in and for any positive comments from teachers, and then discuss ways to improve if needed.

#### **Are you planning to participate in a YFU or other trip? Have you submitted your Permission to Travel form yet?**

Students need to get approval for any trips and travel. Please remind them that they need to review the **Permission to Travel Form** at least one month in advance of their travel date as obtaining all required elements for YFU approval can take some time. They should not purchase tickets, until their plans have been approved by YFU.

**Note:** If your student has been on probation, the probationary status stays with them for the entire program. This could mean they have forfeited the privilege to participate in YFU trips.

### FOR FAMILIES

#### **How are things going? (\*If there were any issues during the holidays which you discussed during your January contact, please make sure to ask your family where the issues stand now). How could this experience be better for you?**

## ADMINISTRATIVE

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

Your mid-year in-person contact must take place before the end of February - if you haven't seen your student and host family during the holidays or in the New Year, please prioritize it this month. This counts as your required monthly contact, so be sure to talk with your student and host family separately. Also, don't forget to indicate that you met in-person with the student in your monthly report.

#### **SECOND SCHOOL CONTACT DUE THIS MONTH**

Take a moment to review the suggested School Contact questions listed to the right and pages 16-17 in the **Volunteer Handbook**. The second school contact is due by February 28th! Please document your school contact in the contact report.

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

Let your international student and host parents know that they should receive information this month about end-of-year departure dates and instructions on how to request a date change or CDR (Change of Departure Request). Students from Germany and from countries that arrange their own travel must request a CDR through their own YFU country office. CBYX students must return on a YFU group flight, and are not permitted to stay later than June 30, 2014.

YES and FLEX students cannot change their return date as they participate in national Re-entry Orientations before flying home together as a group.

Encourage each family member to consider and discuss what would make the second half of the year as or more positive for everyone. It could be something as simple as going on a family camping trip or the student not using up the hot water during a long shower. Encourage the family to talk about these ideas with their student.

### **How is your student doing in school? Is your student taking different classes this semester/trimester?**

Ask about the student's report card and discuss strengths and weaknesses. Are there any areas where improvement is needed? How many hours are spent on homework? Discuss any relevant concerns brought up from your recent school contact. Find out how much time the host parents are spending, supporting the student in their studies. Contact your SSM to report failing grades or less than C averages.

### **Has your student received a return travel itinerary?**

As return travel itineraries are addressed to students, sometimes they forget to share the information with their host families. It is important that the host family knows the date and time of the student's return flight so that they can plan. If the host family is unaware of the return itinerary, you can check with the student to see if she/he has received it. Host families can also view the return itinerary on the Host Family Interface. Log into [yfuusa.org](http://yfuusa.org) and click on the "My Account" link in the upper right-hand corner of the page.

### **Ask your Host Family if they have considered hosting again next year.**

You know your families the best. If you think it won't overwhelm them—let your families know that now is the ideal time to let YFU know if they are interested in hosting again in order to secure a school slot and select a student who suits the family. Consider bringing some student profiles you select for them. Filling out a new application, even if they aren't sure yet, is a first step. Families can start on their application for the 2014-2015 school year by logging into the Host Family Interface.

## **FOR SCHOOLS**

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**Please contact your school to discuss newly arrived semester students and year students.**

### **Has the student's attendance at school been satisfactory?**

YFU must ensure all students attend school daily. Excused absences are due only to illness or YFU approved travel with host parents.

### **Have there been great changes in the student's grades, English or social skills? Are they participating in extracurricular activities?**

In addition to reviewing mid-term and semester grades, discuss other progress your student has made throughout the last term. 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 student 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 strong relationships with hosting schools year to year. School retention is essential to a successful placement year; if a difficult student is influencing the school's decision to accept future YFU students, address the issue without violating confidentiality or getting too deeply involved in support issues. If your schools indicate preference whether to accept another YFU student or not, please pass along this information to your Field Director or Field Recruiter.

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