



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

MARCH SUPPORT TIPS

In YFU time, March tends to be one of the slower months of the support year. We hope this means March will be a smooth month for host families, students and our volunteers, making all eager to share their YFU Story with friends and family and neighbors.

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

SPRING BREAK!

Spring Break is known in the movies as a week of crazy partying and questionable activities. Remind students their actions have consequences. They need to decide whether their actions are a good representation of themselves, their home country, family, YFU and host family as well. It would be tragic to have problems and possibly early return at this point in their exchange experience.

Many students will be traveling this month. Remind them, **Permission to Travel forms** must be turned in two (2) weeks prior to the departure date.

SHARING THEIR YFU STORY

Although March is known for its stormy weather, it usually is a calm time and one of the slower months of the support year. Hopefully, March will be a smooth month for your host family and student making them all eager to share their **YFU Story** with friends, family and neighbors.

NATURAL FAMILY VISIT

YFU strongly discourages natural families visiting students while on program. However, around spring break and graduation, visits sometimes occur. If the Natural Parents or other family members or friends do decide to visit, YFU USA recommends this visit be at the end of the student's stay, not during Spring Break! It is important to remind your student that natural family visits must be approved in advance by YFU USA's National Office before any arrangements are made.

Please inform your student of the proper steps to take in asking for approval:

- Natural parents must first approach the YFU office in their country with a request.

- Then the partner office will contact YFU USA with the request.
- YFU USA will then contact the Host Family. Students should not request directly to their host parents (HPs), because it sometimes puts the HPs in an awkward position.

Also, Host families must not be expected to accommodate visiting family members or friends with regard to room, meals or transportation.

ARE YOUR FAMILIES HOSTING NEXT YEAR?

March is a good month for host families to start thinking about next year, if they are going to host. It is not the responsibility of the Area Rep to ask your families this question; however if you are comfortable - this month is the month to ask your host family if they will consider hosting again for 2015-2016. Make sure to first ask them if they have any pending issues or concerns of the current experience, before you talk to them about the idea of hosting next year.

If you are aware that the placement has experienced difficulties, consult with your Field Director if your host family should be approached to host next year. Field Director may have already decided to not approach your host family to host again.

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY - APRIL 17-19

Next month youth around the world will service in their community. Encourage all YFU students to **volunteer in their community** and **share** the stories + photos with YFU. Help them find or create a local project and share the American value of volunteerism with them. They can register their own event on gysd.org.

- Remind scholarship students that specific community service hours is part of their scholarship requirement.

THANK YOU!

You are YFU's eyes and ears on the ground. YFU Area Reps across the country are the first contact and sometimes the only YFU representatives to have direct contact with the students and host families on program. This is a great honor and a great responsibility. We thank you for accepting this responsibility and helping YFU support thousands of healthy and successful exchanges each year.

ADMINISTRATIVE

CHANGE OF DEPARTURE REQUEST (CDR)

All students should have received their return date with instructions and fees on how to request a date change if they are eligible! If your student has not received this information, please contact travel@yfu.org. Please note, on April 1st, the departure date change cost will increase to \$150 (versus the \$100 cost right now). Remember that CBYX, FLEX and YES students do not get to select their return date.

Students from the following 10 countries will either be contacted from their home country YFU office directly, or will be informed of their return date if and when YFU USA Travel receives their information: Paraguay, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Vietnam.

SCHEDULE THE LAST FEW CONTACTS

March is upon us, leading to the many activities of spring such as spring break, proms, and other end of year events. Time will begin to fly by for your student. Before it gets too busy, schedule April, May and June contact calls or visits now when you make your March contact.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

FOR STUDENTS

What are your plans for Spring Break?

Remind students that there are guidelines they must follow before deciding to go anywhere, even if it is with their host family. Review the Permission to Travel form and make sure the student understands what is and isn't allowed by YFU. Also, stress the importance of making good choices, whether on a YFU trip, or trip with your host family.

When are you scheduled to return home? Have you discussed your departure date and plans with your host family and natural family? (follow-up if they had indicated they want to change the date: Have you submitted your CDR form indicating the change?)

Encourage the student to make sure to read their travel letter thoroughly. Not all students are allowed to change their dates; therefore instruct your student to follow the instructions on the letter. If they can submit a Change of Departure Request (CDR) forms, the deadline is approaching. On April 1st the non-negotiable price will increase to \$150 for any changes to flights.

Does your natural family plan on visiting you in the US?

If a student's natural family is considering visiting the US—let the student know that natural family visits are strongly discouraged by YFU and recommended only at the end of their stay. Please advise them with the steps outlined in this month's support tips. It is important to remember that such visits or travel may cause adjustment problems so serious that YFU may have to consider an Early Return of the student. Under no circumstances may a student miss school to undertake such travel.

FOR FAMILIES

Does your family and/or student have any spring break plans? Does it involve traveling?

Spring break is an exciting time for high school students, but for parents it can be a challenge to ensure that students are safe and making good choices. YFU exchange students must abide by the safety rules and regulations outlined in the **Permission to Travel** forms and **YFU Trip policies**. Group activities that do not involve adult chaperones and drivers are not permitted such as driving long distances to amusement parks, cottage homes, etc.

If your student is traveling somewhere approved by YFU, make sure s/he has completed a Permission to Travel form and that it has been submitted to Samantha Post, spost@yfu.org, at the National Office in Washington DC.

Do you know when your student's departure date? Have you discuss this yet with your new son or daughter?

YFU Travel letters have been sent and your student should have received the return itinerary and Change of Departure Request (CDR) form by now. Have you and your student discussed his/her return travel dates?

Not all students can change their departure date, so encourage the host family to help read through the student's travel letter for directions. If the student can and wants to change his/her return flight, s/he should try to do so before April 1st when the price for a CDR increases to \$150. Make sure that host parents know that CDR fees are the responsibility of the natural parent/student not the host parent.

Have you talked with your student about all of the potential costs of traveling home?

Stress that it is not the host family's responsibility to cover costs incurred by the students. Even experienced travelers have a difficult time sorting out airline fees, and most students are not aware of airline charges for excess and oversized luggage. Host families can help students prepare for unexpected costs. Airline policies vary, so check directly with the airline that each student is using for their specific policies and fees.

Is there anything you would like to ask me or pending issues you would like to discuss?

Giving host families the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns they might have will hopefully alleviate any pending issues that may otherwise come up later. Now is a good time to address these issues so the exchange ends on a good note.

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