



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

APRIL SUPPORT TIPS

Spring into action! Now is the time of year when most teens become busy with extra curricular activities and end of school year events, and YFU students are no exception! It is important for Area Reps to make sure that students begin to prepare for their return trip home - academically, logistically and mentally.

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 HAS ARRIVED!

With spring, a flurry of activities begin! Spring sports, new romances and “where has the year gone?” are all part of April! Area Representatives are challenged to keep students focused and make the most of the remainder of their exchange year. Remind students that YFU expects them to maintain at least a C average.

RE-ENTRY ORIENTATIONS

Spring also brings the final YFU Orientation for International Students. Please remind students and host parents of the date for your area. Emphasize that participation is mandatory and we believe will help them prepare to say goodbye. During the last months, students are resistant on participating so warn them up front about this orientation which usually occurs in May or June. This orientation will prepare students for the return home, and think about how to make the most of their last days in the US.

“THANK YOU” TO HOST FAMILIES

Encourage your student to THANK their host family, host school and the wider community. There are many ways to do this. Student could start working on a thank you letters to their host families, write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper (Letter to the Editor Ideas), or write a letter to their school (Letter to Schools Ideas).

GRADES VALIDATED

Each student who needs his/her grades validated needs to begin the process now, especially if planning an earlier return to their home country. Not every school will validate grades; therefore have your student talk to their school counselor. Students who need co-validation should have come with this

information from their home country. If they have problems or questions, encourage them to contact their consulate or embassy in their area.

NATURAL FAMILY VISITS

Although YFU discourages visits from the student’s natural family, some families want to visit their child at the end of the program. All natural families who consider such visits must contact their YFU National or District Office in their home countries. The YFU National office will contact YFU USA and YFU USA must approve before any arrangements are made. Please help us make sure students know this information. Host families are not expected to accommodate visiting family members or friends with regards to rooms, meals or transportations. International Students are not allowed to miss any day of school due to Natural Family visit. Please have the host family contact the YFU USA District Office if they have heard of such plans which cause them concern.

ENCOURAGE YOUR HOST FAMILIES TO HOST AGAIN!

April is a good time to talk with your family about this. Take time to talk with host families about their experience, and if you feel comfortable— invite them to think about hosting again in the future because their student has enjoyed living with them and another student should have that great opportunity. Some families may choose to take a break for a year, while others are ready to host again.

If families have had a positive experience and felt supported by their YFU Area Rep, they are twice as likely to host again. It’s important to keep our good host families coming back! If, on the other hand, you have concerns about your host family’s suitability to host again, please consult with your Field Director of Support Services Manager before you approach your host family about hosting again.

ADMINISTRATIVE

CDR DEADLINE PASSED

The first deadline for Change of Departure Request (CDR) forms has passed, and the next and last deadline for any changes in return travel dates is fast approaching. The cost of changing any return itinerary is now \$150. All CDR must be returned as the instructions indicate by May 1. If planning to extend their stay, students must have their natural parents contact their National Office in their home country and then the YFU USA district office will ask the host family if they are in agreement.

Remember not all students are eligible for CDR. CBYX 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.

FINAL SCHOOL CONTACT THIS MONTH

Take a moment to review the suggested School Contact questions listed below, and help YFU form a relationship with the school for next year's students. The final school contact is due by May 1st. Please document your school contact in the contact report.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

FOR STUDENTS

How is this semester/trimester going? How were your mid-term grades?

Remind students that making a good impression on the school is very important for future YFU students. During their last few months, it is particularly important for YFU students to stay engaged in their academic lives and maintain at least a C average.

Have you begun the process of collecting your transcripts and if necessary, co-validating your grades?

Each state has a different procedure for co-validation, so make sure your student checks with the consulate in their state or region. It is the responsibility of the student to collect all needed documentations before they leave. In the past it has fallen to the Host family once the student is gone – this is not the HF's responsibility. Students need to be on top of this information and start this process early! YFU will not get involved in obtaining co-validation.

Have you thought about how you will say thank you to your host family, school and larger community for welcoming you into their lives?

As is typical with teenagers, they may rush to pack in activities with friends at the end of the year, and neglect their host families. This is also a way of creating distance which, in theory, makes the goodbyes easier. Encourage students to make a plan for showing gratitude to their host family and school before departure.

What are your end-of-the-year plans? Think back on the goals you developed before coming to the US. Have you reached your goals? What goals do you have left to complete in the next 2-3 months?

Many students pack their social lives with friends and forget about their host families. It's important that our students are reminded of the Family part of their YFU experience. Also encourage them to communicate openly with their host families, especially about schedules so social activities and family activities do not clash.

Prom: Attending prom can be very expensive. With advance planning, students may be able to borrow a suit or dress or purchase one at a resale shop.

Natural Family Visits: Remind the students that such visits must be pre-approved by YFU. Natural family who want to visit must contact their YFU National Office. Then that National Office will contact YFU USA and YFU SUA will access if a visit will negatively effect the student's adjustment. Students & natural families MUST receive approval from YFU before arrangements are made.

Again the decision is approved by YFU USA – students should not go and ask their host family (as this puts the host families in an unfortable situation, feeling like they have to say yes). YFU USA will go to the host family and ask if they feel comfortable with the natural parents visiting. Also, host families cannot be expected to host natural family members.

FOR FAMILIES

Has your student discussed any end-of-year plans, such as prom, travel or visits from their natural family?

Students must plan their end-of-year activities in accordance with YFU policies and with approval from their host family. YFU has strict policies about drinking and participating in dangerous activities.

Prom: Transportation to the dance, and before and after party plans should be spelled out by students to their host parents.

Natural family visit: Please have the host family contact the YFU District Office if they have heard of such plans which cause concern. Let the host family know that the natural families have to receive approval from YFU USA, so we appreciate them expressing any concerns.

Help your host family think of activities their students can do if their school ends early. Many students choose to do community service or serve as Ambassadors for YFU by making presentations to community groups.

Is there anything I or YFU could have done to make your hosting experience better?

We want families to feel comfortable discussing any issues that may be brewing. Asking what you or YFU could do better is an important part of this conversation. In addition, take time to give positive feedback to the host family. If they are a family you would like to see host again, highlight the ways they created a positive environment for an exchange student and tell them they are doing a great job. If you feel comfortable, encourage them to think about hosting again, because they are such a great family!

FOR SCHOOLS

Has your YFU student contacted you about getting copies of his/her transcript and grades?

Alert your school contacts that some YFU students need co-validation for their grades so that they can obtain academic credit in their home countries. Students will have all the information they need to make this happen; the process should start as soon as possible.

Has your YFU student made progress both academically and socially?

We evaluate a student's progress not just by what is reflected on the report card, but also by increased engagement in social situations.

Is there an appropriate event at which your student and YFU can thank your school community for their hospitality this year?

Encourage students to make the most of their last months in America by participating in school events.

Is there anything I or YFU could have done to make your YFU experience better?

It's helpful to have notes in our system about each school's experiences, so that we can customize our approach in the future.

When will your student return home?

Students may have as much as a month of free time after the school year ends and before they leave the US.

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