

# HOST FAMILY INFORMATION GUIDE



# HOMESTAY PROGRAM

Contact us via email at:

[Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca)

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## **WELCOME MESSAGE**

Thank you for deciding to become a host family for Red Deer Public Schools. We know that you did not make this decision lightly. Opening your home to students from a different country and culture and taking on the responsibility of being a host family is a big decision and a critical part of our quality program. Thanks to people like you, the Red Deer Public International Student Program) is well known for its quality experience, care and support for the students participating.

We have prepared this Host Family Information Guide to help orient your family to hosting international students and to familiarize you with the responsibilities of your role and rules specific to our program.

We offer a full-service support team who will do all we can to ensure a successful hosting experience.

## FOCUS

Our program focuses on three key areas:

**Quality education experiences** that support English language development and the overall academic performance and social development of the participating student.

**Cultural exploration and experience** for participating students to understand and appreciate our community, province, and country.

**Safe and nurturing home environments** that ensure the physical, emotional, and social needs of the students are met.





As a host family, your role primarily involves providing a safe and nurturing home and supporting cultural experiences.

## Benefits of Hosting

- ❖ Opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life.
- ❖ Create lifelong relationships and connections from around the world.
- ❖ Make unforgettable memories.
- ❖ Gain a new family member and change someone's life.
- ❖ Introduce your family to other customs and cultures.



## RED DEER PUBLIC SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM - STAFF

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BRIAN PLASTOW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Director of International Education/Custodian for International Students in Homestay</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:brian.plastow@rdpsd.ab.ca">brian.plastow@rdpsd.ab.ca</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">403-343-1405 -wk</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LISA LOEPPKY</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">International Education Coordinator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:lisa.loepky@rdpsd.ab.ca">lisa.loepky@rdpsd.ab.ca</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">403-318-1896 - cell</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KERRY CUNNINGHAM</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">International Student Program Assistant</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:kerry.cunningham@rdpsd.ab.ca">kerry.cunningham@rdpsd.ab.ca</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">403-342-3729 - wk Mon - Fri 8 am - 4 pm</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SANDI RINGHAM</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Homestay Coordinator</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-emergent emails or text messages until 6pm</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca">Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">587-679-0791 - cell</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EMERGENCIES MUST CALL NO TEXTS</b></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Alejandra Feindel</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Homestay Admin Assistant</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-emergent emails or text message until 6pm</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="mailto:homestay2@rdpsd.ab.ca">homestay2@rdpsd.ab.ca</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">587-679-0567- cell</p>

## **ROLES - WHO DOES WHAT?**

### **Homestay Coordinator**

The Homestay Coordinator is the liaison between the host, the student, and the program. The Homestay Coordinator is the person who processes host applications, completes home visits, matches students to hosts and provides support for all parties during the student's stay. They will also contact you, the hosts each semester to complete a student status report. Advise your Homestay Coordinator of any travel plans or host profile changes as soon as possible. It is important we know right away about any changes in the residents of your home.

For all communication that is not an emergency, please email your Homestay Coordinator at [homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca)

### **Custodian**

The Director of international education at Red Deer Public Schools is the legal custodian for the international students in our homestay program.

The custodian is legally responsible for our students and needs to be informed of any serious medical or legal situations.

The custodian delegates the authority to host parents to sign forms for school-organized field trips. Host parents may also sign consent/permission forms for students to join the Collicutt Centre or other local fitness centers.

### **International Education Coordinator**

Works with students, agents and parents from the initial inquiry to final reports after the student returns home. Provides support and back up for Homestay Coordinator in their absence and establishes required permissions for student travel, sleepovers, etc.

### **International Program Assistant**

Is responsible for all financial activity, including managing the host reimbursement payments, accounts receivable/accounts payable, database management. They also process all documents for incoming students and organize all activities for the students during their stay.

### **Homestay Assistant**

Is responsible for providing support to the Homestay Coordinator and the Homestay Program.

## Natural Parents

Natural parents *may* contact host families once the student has received your host family profile.

Hosts should feel free to communicate with natural parents during your student's stay. It is important to discourage things such as the natural parents dictating more liberal curfews from afar. Natural parents should not be advising you on your own house rules.

Any concerns regarding communication with natural parents should be brought to the attention of the Homestay Coordinator.

## Agent

The majority of our students will come through an education agency or through the school in their home country. The agency is the link to the natural parents. All contact with Agents should be through the program. Please let your Homestay Coordinator know if an agent is contacting you directly.

## HOMESTAY OFFICE HOURS

Regular office hours for the Homestay Coordinator are **Monday to Friday, 8AM – 4PM.**

During office hours, you are welcome to phone, text or email the Homestay Coordinator with your concerns or questions.

Outside of office hours, for any non-emergent concerns, please send an email to [homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca) and the Homestay Coordinator will contact you the next business day.

Emergencies may include things such as injuries requiring immediate hospital attention, any RCMP involvement, any strong suspicion of alcohol or drug use, missing student(s), etc.

**For all emergencies, please call 587-679-0791 anytime day or night. In the event your call is not answered, the alternate emergency number is 403-318-1896 (please call twice).**





## HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

The most important role of a host family is to provide a safe and nurturing home, thus everyone in the home must be committed to the success of this experience. In order for a student to feel comfortable and accepted as a true member of your family they require physical and emotional support. Your student needs to feel that you genuinely care through your words and actions.

In order to support the primary goal of English language development, English must be the primary language spoken at all times when the student is present.

***Never leave the student(s) alone at home alone overnight. If a situation arises where the student(s) are alone for more than 8 hours, the Homestay Coordinator must be contacted immediately. Phone 587-679-0791 or email: [homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca)***

**There are many ways to support your student:**

- ❖ To support relationship building and reduce potential problems, making the student feel welcome is key.
- ❖ Taking time to assist them when meeting the challenges of new culture, food, language and academics is crucial to their success.
- ❖ Share your interests with your student, and invite them to share their interests with you. Everyone can learn to try something new!
- ❖ Encourage your student to become active in the community by getting involved in extracurricular activities. Please support them in finding these opportunities.
- ❖ Talk to your student and take an interest in their schoolwork, friends and activities.

Miscommunication and lack of understanding are the leading factors for most difficulties between hosts and students. Take the time to establish clear expectations by communicating in multiple formats, (ie) written household rules as well as verbal explanation.

Read and be familiar with the International Student Participation Agreement (appendix) This is the agreement students and their parents must sign to participate in the program.



## **YOU ARE MATCHED WITH YOUR STUDENT, NOW WHAT??**

You will receive the profile of your student(s) at the same time as the student's agent receives your profile. **You must wait for the student to reach out to you first.** If your student has not contacted you within two weeks, please contact the Homestay Coordinator.

Once your student has reached out, feel free to communicate with them and their family to get to know them before they arrive.

### **Prior to their arrival**

Ensure you are aware of the designated arrival dates and will be available for pick up and to welcome your student into your home.

Many hosts prepare a small welcome basket for the student's room which may include snacks, a bottle of water and possibly a small welcome gift. Try to imagine what would make you feel comfortable arriving at a stranger's home in a new country.

Watch for emails in the last half of August (and January) containing details about arrival times, orientation and school start up.

In the event that you need to arrange for another host to transport your student, please ensure that an adult is home to greet them when they arrive. If this is not possible, you must notify the Homestay Coordinator ahead of time.

### **Arrival Day**

Host families are expected to pick their student(s) up at the airport whenever possible.

The Homestay Coordinator will share arrival details with all hosts a few weeks prior to arrival. The Homestay Coordinator (or another program staff) will be at the airport on the designated arrival dates to meet all students and to ensure students and hosts connect.

Please confirm with the Homestay Coordinator prior to leaving the airport with your student(s).

Please remind your student to contact their natural parents of their safe arrival.

Check to see if they need a snack or water before the drive home and explain the length of the drive.

## HOME SWEET HOME

After your student has met all family members, here are some suggestions for their first day (or once they have rested):

- ❖ Supply the student with ALL of your contact information. Some hosts prepare a small card for their wallet with address, email and phone numbers for all family members.
- ❖ House tour (show the student the home, what areas are private spaces and what areas are shared spaces)
- ❖ Give student a written copy of your household rules
- ❖ Key or door code
- ❖ Explain emergency protocols (IE. 911, muster points)

### Room and Amenities

Hosts are required to provide a private bedroom with a window (must meet current code standards), provide appropriate bedding, dresser, closet/wardrobe, lamp, bedside table, desk or study area. Students will have access to the common living areas of the house and amenities including TV's, electronics and seating areas. Access to hygiene facilities, linens and basic bathing supplies. Students will require access to laundry facilities and supplies as well as training on how to use these appliances. Please show the student a place they can safely store or lock up valuables such as their passport and money.

### Access to Internet and Phone

Internet access should be available to the student, but you can set reasonable limits for internet usage. If you have a cap on your internet plan, we strongly recommend that you explain this to your student so they understand that video streaming needs to be somewhat limited. If excessive internet and computer usage becomes a problem, please contact the Homestay Coordinator.

### Cell Phones

Help your student arrange for a pay as you go cell phone, or a plan specially designed for international students.

Host families should NEVER sign for monthly cell phone plans for students.

Students can check out the rates from numerous different companies to find the best plan for their needs.

### Canadian Holidays and Celebrations

Students come to Canada with an expectation of experiencing some common Canadian celebrations. The most common ones are Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

If your student is staying with you over Christmas, you should plan to give them gifts, just as you would for others in your immediate household. These items do not need to be overly expensive but small thoughtful gifts to bring back home are great ideas.

If your family does not celebrate any of the above holidays, please be sure to let our Homestay Coordinator know so that we can ensure that they have the opportunity to experience some of these traditions with a friend's family while they are here.



## FOOD

Ideally, families should be eating suppers together whenever possible as this is important family time. Students SHOULD NOT eat alone on a regular basis.

In most families, it is common for individual family members to make their own breakfast and lunch, and then share in the preparation and eating of an evening meal.

Students may need to be taught how to make breakfast and lunch. You may need to offer ideas of what they can prepare as they may not cook at home or the food may be very different from what they are used to. This is part of the experience of living in Canada.

The student is a temporary family member, not a guest, and as such conforms to your family practices.

Tell them about the kitchen rules to prevent any misunderstandings. If they are hungry after dinner or want a snack after school, show them what foods they can help themselves to.

One of the most difficult adjustments for your international student may be dietary. Take your student food shopping with you and ask your student what he/she would like.

Let your student know what the plans are for leftovers and what items they are free to eat for snacks if they are still hungry after meals.

Host families are not expected to provide specialized diets unless it has been approved ahead of time and communicated to the host family through the Homestay Coordinator. If your student is requesting a specialized diet, please contact Homestay Coordinator for clarification, as the student may be required to pay extra fees.

If you are choosing to take your family out for supper, then it is expected that the family will pay for the student's meal. If your student is choosing to go to the mall or out for a meal with their friends, the student would pay for their own meal.

Some students are very social and like to be out with friends. Establish a rule early on that they must advise you if they will be home for dinner or want a meal saved for later on. They should be making an effort to eat with the family most nights.

Many students will not be used to having dinner at 6 pm and might be hungry later around 8 or 9 pm when they are more accustomed to eating. Hosts do not need to adjust your family's meal schedule but providing some understanding as students adjust to a new schedule is helpful.



## HOUSEHOLD RULES & SCHEDULES

Advise them of dinner time, curfews, and explain rules regarding use of bathroom/shower, laundry, houseguests, and removal of shoes.

Please provide a written list of house rules. Remember that their English may not be strong so you may need to review rules a few times. Give a copy of the rules for the student to refer to. It is best to set up the household rules within 3 days after they arrive. As your relationship develops, you may choose to revisit or renegotiate these parameters.

## CLOTHING AND CHANGING WEATHER

As Albertans, we know how the weather can change quickly and drastically. Many foreign students are not aware of this nor are they familiar with dressing safely in extremely cold weather. They need to be taught that when they go out for the day. They need to be prepared for any change in weather. Hosts should pay special attention as to whether students are dressed appropriately when they are participating in outdoor activities during winter months or during extreme cold snaps.

## SPIRITUAL WELL BEING

If your international student practices a faith other than your own, you can provide a list of places of worship. Your student may wish to learn about your family's religion. If so, it would be perfectly appropriate to invite them to attend religious services with you but it should be the student's choice whether to attend.

## STUDENT TRAVEL

### Travel Policy for Red Deer Public International Students

- ❖ Students may travel out of town with their host families.
- ❖ Students may travel out of town with another host family from the same program
- ❖ Under any other circumstances, ALL of the following conditions must be met:
  - Students must be under the direct supervision of an adult 25 years or older.
  - Student's natural parents must provide written consent.

- Students must provide details of the proposed trip with contact info of supervising adults, etc.
- Students must receive consent from their custodian before making any concrete plans or incurring any costs associated with the proposed trip.

***This policy applies to all students studying in middle or high school, even those over the age of 18.***

If your student goes home for the holidays or leaves the homestay for other trips, hosts are not expected and are discouraged from providing transportation to and from the airport for these extra trips. Students and their parents are made aware of approved airport transfer options. Students risk being removed from the program should they not follow the guidelines. Once all of the above conditions are met, and a confirmation from program staff is received, students are welcome to travel outside of Red Deer.

## **MONEY**

### **Student's expenses responsibility:**

- ❖ Clothes (especially winter clothes).
- ❖ School supplies.
- ❖ Personal toiletries.
- ❖ Personal computer, laptop, tablet or cell phone based on their own needs.
- ❖ Long distance phone calls if using the home phone.
- ❖ Medicines of all kinds. (student medical insurance covers most prescriptions)
- ❖ Dental work. (student medical insurance covers some emergency dental)
- ❖ Haircuts and other personal services.
- ❖ Personal entertainment and expenses.
- ❖ Fitness center memberships
- ❖ Costs associated with participation in school-sponsored activities (e.g. graduation ceremonies, school dances, extra-curricular sports, school trips, etc.).
- ❖ Any meals or snacks desired while outside of the host home. (e.g. Out for lunch with friends.
- ❖ Entrance fees or tickets to special activities such as: waterpark, ski lift tickets, movies, etc. will be paid by the student unless the host chooses to pay.
- ❖ Stamps, stationery, books, magazines, CDs, posters, etc.
- ❖ Costs related to renewal of student visas, travel home, etc.

### **Host's Expense Responsibility:**

- ❖ Access to three wholesome meals a day, one of which will be a hot meal and snacks as required. While limitations may be placed on certain, more expensive, snacks, availability of other food/snack options should not be restricted at any time. (E.g. you are not required to supply them with beef jerky because they like it. You are expected to

make sure they have other wholesome options they can eat, such as fruit, bread, crackers, cheese, etc.)

- ❖ It is expected that host families will provide basic hygiene items such as toilet paper, laundry supplies, hand soap, basic shampoo, toothpaste, etc. Any items students' request such as specific brands of shampoo, etc. should be considered personal toiletries and the responsibility of the student.
- ❖ Restaurant or takeout meals when the family is going out to eat together.
- ❖ Ensure that your student is aware in advance of all costs that they will incur for any activities you arrange and that they have the option to decline participating.



## DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND DRIVING

Even though a student may be of legal drinking age, a condition of their acceptance to study in our program requires that the student conform to the International Student Participation Agreement that does not permit the consumption/use/purchase/possession of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco or illegal drugs. *It is important that this is followed, even if your family has a more 'lenient' ideology.*

Students are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicles while attending high school as an international student as per the International Student Participation Agreement.

Please report to the Homestay Coordinator any situations where there are concerns with your student.

Breaking any part of the International Student Participation Agreement may result in a student being sent home early with no refund.

**IMPORTANT**  
**International student medical insurance will NOT**  
**cover medical treatment, hospital charges or**  
**ambulance charges if drugs or alcohol are involved.**

## CURFEWS

Recommended curfews are 10 pm on weeknights and later on weekends at your discretion. There may be special occasions when students ask to extend the weekend curfew, but this should not be a regular occurrence. Give consideration for the student's age, circumstance and type of activity when setting curfews. Ultimately, it is what your family is comfortable with. If your student misses curfew more than a couple of times, please contact the Homestay Coordinator.



## **LAUNDRY**

It is your choice whether to do laundry for the student or to teach them how to do their own. Some students may request to wash items by hand in which case we ask that you show them an appropriate place to hang clothes to dry.

## **CHORES**

Students are expected to have some light chores or assist with some duties in the house. As mentioned previously, it is expected that they contribute to the tasks of maintaining the home. They are not your 'hired help', but neither are you their 'hired help'. Many students may come from homes where they are not expected to participate in household chores or cooking. Learning tasks such as cleaning their bathroom, doing dishes, vacuuming, laundry, dusting, snow shoveling, etc., are all part of the experience. Be patient and teach them what is expected.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Students will receive their bus pass at orientation. They may require assistance in finding the bus stop near their home and learning transit routes.

Hosts are not expected to drive students regularly however there are some circumstances where rides are encouraged. (E.g. Extreme weather, early morning or late-night field trips, late school activities or special events.)

If you choose to provide rides, set out the parameters and expectations, such as requesting a day or two priors.

Students are permitted to ride in cars within the city limits with licensed and insured drivers.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Students are required to disclose a list of any medications that they bring with them to the Homestay Coordinator who will in turn advise the host.

It is suggested that hosts provide the student with a secure place to store medications, especially if there are younger children in the home.

## **MEDICAL/DR. VISITS AND EMERGENCIES**

Your student has international student medical insurance. Students will receive a copy of their card prior to arrival, at orientation and a copy can be emailed to host parents upon request.

Hosts are expected to assist their student(s) with medical visits.

Students must bring their insurance card and photo ID if they go to a clinic or hospital. We have some clinics set up for direct billing but sometimes the student will have to pay upfront for some services and be reimbursed after the insurance company receives the receipt and claim form.

Please advise your Homestay Coordinator if you are taking your student to a clinic or hospital. If the student does not have a credit card please do not pay for medical services on their behalf. Contact the Homestay Coordinator for assistance with payment. One of our staff will come to pay for hospital visits if needed.

In the event you are unable to contact the Homestay Coordinator, please contact the International Education Coordinator.

For information on current direct billing clinics in Red Deer, See appendix C (International Students and Medical Insurance)

## **STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

All student relationships are to remain platonic (close friendship without romantic or sexual features). If you suspect that your student may have entered a relationship that does not fit these parameters, it is important to share this information with the Homestay Coordinator for further investigation.

## **ABSENCES**

Hosts are expected to contact the school to verify the student if they are ill or missing school due to special trips with the family.

Lindsay Thurber High School attendance email: [lt-attendance@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:lt-attendance@rdpsd.ab.ca)

Lindsay Thurber High School attendance phone: 403-314-2017

Hunting Hills High School attendance email: [hhhsattendance@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:hhhsattendance@rdpsd.ab.ca)

Hunting Hills High School attendance phone: 403-342-1574

The Homestay Coordinator does not need to be notified unless it is a severe or prolonged illness.

## **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS**

Encourage your student to join clubs or teams at school – this is an excellent way to make new friends (especially with other Canadians).

## **FAMILY EXCURSIONS**

The cost of excursions including gas, ferry rides, etc. should be borne by the host if you are going somewhere as a family. Please discuss with your student in advance if an excursion requires expensive admission or travel costs and give them the option to join if they are okay

to cover their own costs, i.e. a theme park ticket, ski pass and rentals.

Students have had the opportunity to join host family vacations to the US, Caribbean, etc. if the natural parents agreed to pay the student's costs.

## **SLEEPOVERS**

Sleepovers at another host family with the Red Deer Public Schools program are allowed once both sets of host parents have spoken to each other via phone or in person and agree.

Sleepovers with Canadian friends (or host families from other programs) require advance notice and permission from the custodian.

Try to support their experiences, but make sure their plans don't conflict with your family's needs, routine or those of another host family.

## **RESPITE**

In the event that hosts need to be away overnight or for a number of days, there are several options for respite care for your student.

**Option 1** – Host can make arrangements with another host family in our program, then notify the Homestay Coordinator. Ideally, you will ask your student first as they may have a friend staying with another host family where they would prefer to stay. If they do not have a friend they want to stay with, you can contact other families from within our homestay community.

**Option 2** – contact the Homestay Coordinator to request assistance in arranging respite with another host family.

**Option 3** – sometimes a student has a Canadian friend that they would like to stay with. This option requires at least 14 days to allow program staff to secure the necessary consent.

It is important to notify the Homestay Coordinator as soon as respite arrangements are confirmed with another host so that payments can be adjusted.

## **REIMBURSEMENTS**

Host reimbursements are paid at the end of every month for the previous month.

Reimbursements are submitted to accounting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month and the funds should be deposited into your bank account on the last day of each month. Partial months will be paid at a nightly rate as follows: in a 29-day month, the nightly rate is \$30.17, in a 30-day month, the nightly rate is \$29.16 and in a 31-day month, the nightly rate is \$28.22.

Any respite or moves that happen after the 20th of the month will be adjusted in the following month's reimbursement. Respite is calculated by the number of nights. Respite stays for 14  
April 2024

nights or less will be paid at a nightly rate of \$30/night. Respite stays for over 14 nights; the whole stay will be paid at the nightly rate for that month.

Hosts receive an honorarium for airport transportation on initial arrival and departure from the program. Arrival transfers will be paid in the first 2 weeks of September and departure transfers will be paid in the first 2 weeks of July.

Criminal Record Check reimbursements (maximum of 2 per household) are paid out twice a year in August and in February. Keep your receipts and send a copy to [kerry.cunningham@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:kerry.cunningham@rdpsd.ab.ca) for reimbursement.

Host Referral Bonus of \$200 is paid when you refer a host who is approved, is matched with a student, once they have hosted for 2 months and these are paid out twice a year (August and February).



## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Customs surrounding cleanliness, including showers and laundry, to personal space, including shaking hands, hugging and table manners may vary greatly. We encourage you to respectfully discuss these and other habits with your student as early as possible.

Silence and lack of enthusiasm may seem rude to us, but in some cultures, it is a sign of respect. “Please” and “thank you” are not automatically said in some cultures. In many countries’ dinner is often eaten much later than we are accustomed to.

Discuss their differences and their needs, and be understanding and patient as they learn our Canadian customs. *It isn't wrong, it is just different.*

## PRIVACY

While it is important to respect the student’s privacy, it is also recommended you periodically visit the student’s room. Forewarn them if you plan to enter their room so they have the opportunity to put away any personal items.

If there is something you don’t like, such as finding food or garbage in their room, please have a discussion about your expectations.

You should **not** go through backpacks and personal items. You may also need to show them how to use the vacuum and change the linens. Many students may never have made up a bed before this experience away from home.

## APPROPRIATE OR INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

Be aware of individual preferences regarding physical contact. Talk with your student when they arrive in regards to their comfort level with things such as hugs. Having a no touch policy is the safest and eliminates any misunderstandings between host and students.

When spending time with a student in the student's bedroom, please keep the bedroom door open at all times. Please explain to students on how to stay safe and to be clear on what to do if they are in a situation at home, at a friend's home, at school, or in public where they are not at ease. Help them to know it is ok to *SAY NO* and to say it *LOUDLY*.

## **MOVES**

Students may be moved from a homestay for various reasons. For example, if the student and family are unable to create a comfortable bond, the family is not meeting the expectations listed in the Host Family Letter of Agreement, or the host family requests the student to be removed. Please refer to your hosting agreement or contact your Homestay Coordinator if you have any questions. There may not always be a concrete reason for a move even after attempts have been made to resolve any issues. Sometimes it may simply come down to not being a great match between both parties. We all have a duty of care to protect our students who are minors and far away from home. The students' needs have to come first.

When a move is required, it is expected that the receiving host family will complete the move with program support.

## **UNEXPECTED ISSUES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Red Deer Public Schools and our Homestay Coordinator know it is important that our host families feel supported. Your students receive some on-line orientation materials as well as an in-person orientation in their first week here. They are fully aware of our expectations of them as a homestay student. You are not providing a hotel, but a home with a family life.

Even with ample preparation, issues may still arise and we are here to help. You might face issues like not obeying curfew, not attending school, general disrespect or not eating/fussy eater. From the beginning, explain to your student things like curfew, expectations as a family member, use of household items, meal times, etc. These students are not all used to our societal differences, (ie) everything shutting down around 10pm, limited bus service after 10 pm, kids here don't walk around or hang around outside like at home.

Be clear from the onset – house rules must be written down so there is no room for miscommunication or forgetfulness. Keep a copy on the fridge or give a student their own copy to keep in their room to refer to. Failure to clearly communicate the rules almost always results in frustration and disappointment on both sides.

## **STEPS TO RESOLUTION**

- ❖ Discuss concerns respectfully with your student.
- ❖ Contact your Homestay Coordinator who will provide suggestions and support.
- ❖ If requested or required, the Homestay Coordinator will contact the student to discuss the issue and follow up with suggestions for resolution.
- ❖ If necessary, the agent and natural parents will be introduced into the conversation to help support the required behavior from the student. Red Deer Public Schools

homestay program has structured escalation process that may include the following, depending on the severity of the issue:

- Verbal discussion/warning from Homestay Coordinator and/or Custodian
- Behavior contract (copy sent to agent and parents)
- Termination of program and return home.

The host family will be kept up to date as the issue progresses and with regard to which steps have been taken.



## IMPORTANT RULES

- ❖ All individuals over the age of 18 living in the home must provide a vulnerable sector criminal record check and a child intervention check every 3 years.
- ❖ English **must** be the primary language spoken in the home.
- ❖ Students must not travel outside of the city in a vehicle where a driver is under 25 years of age.
- ❖ No opposite gender host siblings from other international programs are allowed.
- ❖ You cannot host international students from other programs with the same nationality or first language – for example Mexico and Spain are both Spanish speaking and would not be permitted.
- ❖ Advise your Homestay Coordinator of any changes to your host profile as soon as possible, including family or friends staying longer than one week or other international students arriving or departing, new pets, contact numbers, etc.
- ❖ Your student requires a private bedroom – no sharing with host siblings or other students from other programs.
- ❖ Household safety is important. Smoke and CO2 detectors are required by provincial and federal laws. Detectors should be fully operational and compliant with standards. Students should know the emergency evacuation plan in case of fire in the home. Home and auto insurance must be kept up to date with adequate coverage.
- ❖ Do not enter into any financial agreements with or for the student, no loaning or requesting a loan from the student. There should be no payments for additional services and it is NOT acceptable to ask for a damage deposit. Do not sign contracts for cell phones or gym memberships for students.

- ❖ Students are not allowed to babysit (this is a liability issue) or perform any chores or work in exchange for money.
- ❖ Damages – must be reported in writing, with photographs, to the Homestay Coordinator within 10 working days. The Homestay Coordinator will visit the home to inspect the damage and discuss the best course of action. Red Deer Public Schools is not responsible for damages incurred, but will facilitate communication with the student and natural parents to seek a resolution acceptable to all parties.
- ❖ Normal wear and tear is not considered to be damage.
- ❖ Never leave your student unsupervised overnight.
- ❖ If your student is going to be involved in an ongoing activity requiring regular driving, please contact the Homestay Coordinator for assistance in negotiating compensation from the natural parents.



## WHEN TO NOTIFY THE HOMESTAY COORDINATOR ABOUT ISSUES

It is important to over inform rather than under inform. If you are having problems with your student, please let the Homestay Coordinator know even if you do not want them to intervene yet. Early support and intervention can keep small problems from becoming big problems. Program staff will decide if action is required.

- ❖ Breaking any of the International Student Participation Agreement
- ❖ Multiple missed curfews
- ❖ Repeated Failure to follow house rules
- ❖ Concerns over student's mental or physical health
- ❖ Student relationship that is suspected to be more than platonic

## FINAL DEPARTURE

Hosts are expected to provide transportation to the airport for their student's departure from the program whenever possible. The Homestay Coordinator will share departure details with all hosts.

In the event you are not able to drive your student to the airport, first try to find another host to transport your student. If you are not able to find alternate transportation, please contact the Homestay Coordinator for assistance.

Check the student's room together to ensure that they have packed all of their belongings and left the room tidy.



## Thank you!

The Red Deer Public Schools Homestay Program thanks you for your important role in promoting friendly relations among our international students. Your student is here to experience life in a different culture. Help him/her to do so at every opportunity. For many, this is a once in a lifetime experience.

Cherish your time with your new student.

Make the most of your new adventure.

Take every chance you can to offer something new – food, cultural events, and sports activities that your student may never be able to experience in his/her own country.

You are encouraged to learn as much as you can about your student's culture for your own personal growth.





## **EMERGENCY HOMESTAY CONTACTS**

RDPSD HOMESTAY COORDINATOR

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL:  
587-679-0791**

**Alternate Emergency Number:  
403-318-1896**

All other non urgent situations can be sent via email/text  
or phone calls during business day.

## HOW TO BECOME A HOMESTAY FAMILY

If you know someone who would like to become a host family, please send an email to [Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca](mailto:Homestay@rdpsd.ab.ca).

Hosts will receive a referral fee one month after a family they refer has successfully hosted a student in their home for a minimum of 2 months.

**APPENDIX**

Appendix A: [Host Family Letter of Agreement](#)

Appendix B: [International Student Participation Agreement](#)

Appendix C: [International Students and Medical Insurance](#)