

The operative word here is *Family*, and we ask you to help your exchange student become a part of your family during the period that he or she lives with you. That means treating this young person as you would your own son or daughter, not as a guest, and exercising all of the [parental responsibilities and authorities](#) you would for your own child. While many factors will influence to what extent you may need to focus on this role, such as your own experience as a host parent, ages of your own children, here are some suggestions that previous host parents have provided to us:

Establish a clear understanding of expectations soon after your student arrives.

The [IB9: Interactive First Night Questions](#) that we provide to both students and host parents that cover most of the topics that will help define those expectations. Cultural differences as well as personality differences often lead to misunderstandings unless these topics are discussed and clarified. Many students will use the questions as a “check-off list” to make sure nothing has been overlooked during the first few days; we suggest that host parents also review this list for any topics that are important to them.

Homesickness can occur at any time in an exchange. Be prepared to help your student recover from homesickness. This can take many forms, from simply general sadness to wishing to stay in his or her room alone. It is perfectly normal for Exchange students to have bad days and experience homesickness. If you are sensitive to this, you will be able to reassure your student that their reactions are perfectly normal. Help them to keep busy and involved. These feelings will pass. Suggest to them that they pour out their frustrations in a letter home (often saying they want to return home immediately), suggest that they put it away for a couple days, re-read it, and only then mail it ... if it still applies. Most times the letter will be deleted!

Understand culture shock, and help your student learn *our* culture. The sheet entitled ‘[DY9.- Coping With Culture Shock](#)’ may help you understand some of the feelings your student may experience as a result of the differences between our culture and the one they have known since birth.

Other Information Needed By Host Parents

Medical Matters

[Consult with the Student Counsellor](#) about registering the student with a doctor. As host parents, you are asked to make arrangements for medical treatment when necessary, as well as to determine when medical treatment is called for. Your student may be reluctant to discuss medical problems initially, and their own culture, or medical system at home, may be quite different than that which we have, so you may need to patiently ask questions and offer suggestions when you observe conditions that may be medically - based. Many Rotary clubs have arrangements with local medical-services providers (often a member of the Rotary club), and you should be apprised of these arrangements by the Rotary YEO or before a medical problem arises.

[It is always advisable to inform the host Rotary club of any medical treatment or medical problems that have occurred so that information is made available to subsequent host families. Serious illnesses or injuries should be made known to the District YE Chair as soon as possible.](#)

Lastly, if there are questions or problems.....

While there is no way we or you can guarantee that every Exchange student and host parent will enjoy a completely successful exchange, we do our best to help them, and you, and the percentage of unsuccessful exchanges is very small. Most problems that do occur can be taken care of satisfactorily *if addressed early*, before they become too big to handle.

IF YOU DO HAVE A CONCERN, AND NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING, please contact the local Rotary Club Youth Exchange Officer or the student's Counsellor. If he or she is not available, please contact a member of the District YE Committee. They will get in touch with the student, and if appropriate, the counterpart in the sponsoring district for further information and help, if needed.

Please do not dismiss non-compliance with our rules, or try to solve major problems yourself. Because this is an international program, there may be cultural and/or Rotary subtleties of which you are unaware, and there may also be long-range implications affecting future exchanges. Please call and give us the opportunity to show you that we are as concerned about the exchange student and the host family and club as you are. We can't help you or the student, if we don't know that there is a problem.

So that you can communicate your concerns there is a form *CP10D: Record of Concerns – a form for CYEOs, the Counsellor and the Host Family* available for download from your student's Inbound Student Folder. This is on Dropbox and will have been shared with you by the DYEO. Once completed it should be sent to the DYEO without delay.

Finally, while much of this document addresses rules, regulations, and “dealing with problems”, we want you to know that being a host parent is also a lot of fun and full of rewards. You will get to know, and love, someone from another country, another culture, and another part of the world. You will have the opportunity, albeit short, to watch, and help shape, the development and maturity of a young person. You will have opportunities to learn of another culture yourself, and in the process of sharing our culture and our country with this student, gain knowledge and understanding for you and your family, and at the end of the exchange, you will have added to your family a son or daughter who may live in a “foreign” country the rest of their life, but will always be a part of **your** family.