

Being a Counsellor for a student is a task which different Rotarians will handle in their own individual way. Youth Exchange students grow in self confidence and maturity during their exchange year and it is very satisfying for a Counsellor, through his/her guidance, to have been a part of that process. Although the Counsellor should not be a host parent, it is common practice for the student to stay with their Counsellor and his/her family for the first few days of their exchange. This has the advantage not only of allowing the Counsellor and student to more easily make all the necessary arrangements and registrations but of giving the student confidence and knowledge that if the going gets tough then there is someone on hand who they can trust and from whom they will receive sound advice.

Counsellors should be familiar with the RIBI Protection Policy and the action to be taken in the event of discovery of abuse or harassment to the inbound student.

It will be helpful if the Counsellor is able to attend the District Orientation Day.

Listed below are some important points to help Counsellors in their task:

1 . Before the arrival of the student:

- a) Establish early contact by e-mail or letter with both the student and his or her parents and give them some information on the area, the school and any information to assist in their final travel preparations. RIBI, Club or District websites and local newspaper website can give the student a lot of information.
- b) Obtain details of the student's anticipated date and time of arrival.
- c) Make contact or visit the school which the student will attend to make arrangements for their education. Obtain term times and bus availability, if appropriate. Obtain details of school uniform, need for dinner money, etc.
- d) Have arranged, at least, the first two host families
- e) Make up a file of useful information for hosts, to be passed on as the student moves.
- f) Submit DBS forms for all hosts to District Protection Officer.
- g) Hold a meeting of Counsellor, Club YE officer, President, Treasurer to discuss finance and the diary for the year.
 - Decide how much to forward to Student on a monthly basis. (If more than one student in a District, best if all have the same amount each month – around £50 per month is acceptable)
 - Decide who has the responsibility for allocation of fund throughout the year.
 - Ensure that hosts realise that if a club invites the student to an event, all costs are down to the club. Transport should also be paid for and arranged by the club, not the host family.
- h) Contact the student and family shortly before the student leaves home to check that there are no medical issues which have arisen recently or which have not been disclosed. Report any changes to the CYEO, the DYEO and the host family.
- i) Check that the student has adequate insurance. If there is any doubt then contact Club, District or RIBI YEO. (*See IF5:Travel Insurance for Students*)

2. On the student's arrival in the country the Counsellor should:

- a) With the first host parents and/or members of the host Rotary Club, welcome the student at the arrival port. If the Counsellor cannot do this then he/she should arrange for another member of the Club to do so.
- b) Visit the school with the student and introduce them to the Head Teacher or Head of Year. Ensure that the student is aware of the choice of subjects available to them and of any examinations that can be taken. Arrange for the purchase of any necessary uniform, the cost of which should be borne by the student's parents.
- c) Where appropriate check the student's visa and temporary residence permit are in order and, if necessary make a note in the student's and the Counsellor's own diaries of the date of any renewal. (This does not apply at present as students who need a visa are not allowed to take part in the programme.
- d) Check that the student's passport is in order and will not expire during their exchange. The student should retain their passport but the Counsellor may find it useful to take a photocopy.
- e) Check the student's airline tickets to be sure that the student is in possession of a round-trip ticket. An open return ticket is necessary in emergencies or if the student must be returned home for disciplinary reasons. The return ticket should be retained by the student but the Counsellor should take photocopies for use in case of an emergency.
- f) Make a Photocopy of parents' consent for travel, if applicable.
- g) Check the student has brought with them an Emergency Fund and arrange for this to be held on their behalf. Agree with the student how this fund is to be administered. All school year exchange students are required to take with them additional money to cover any major unforeseen items. The amount varies from country to country and District to District. It is recommended that this fund is held either in a separate account for which a signature of both student and Counsellor is required to make a withdrawal or is held in the account of the host Rotary Club (it is important to give the student a receipt if this procedure is followed). Agreement needs to be made with natural parents as to how and when any necessary replenishment of the fund is made and also if the fund is to be released to the student during the last few weeks of their exchange or if the student is to take the fund home with them.
- h) Register the student with a doctor or local surgery. This may in practice prove difficult until the student actually needs treatment. The surgery may issue a form which would be used if medical treatment is necessary.
- i) Outline what is expected of the student by Rotary, in your Club and District. For example - attendance at Rotary meetings, regular reports to the Club, attendance at District Council meetings and Conference. As soon as possible take the student to a meeting of the host Rotary Club and if their knowledge of English is good enough ask them to introduce themselves to the Club.
- j) Ensure that the student knows how to contact the Counsellor or Club YEO. Let them have phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses.
- k) Know where to contact the student at any time – consider providing them with a pay as you go mobile phone programmed with important contact numbers.
e.g. Counsellor, Club YEO, Club President, District YEO.

Give the student's mobile phone number to the District YEO, the Club YEO, the Club President and host parents.

Ensure it is agreed with the student who will pay for the phone.
- l) Hold a meeting of all host families and Counsellor shortly after student has been in the country to cross refer information.

3. During their year in this country the Counsellor should:

- a) Meet regularly with them to discuss any problems they may have.
- b) Contact host parents and class teacher to ascertain that there are no problems.
- c) Ensure that the student sends regular reports to their sponsoring District.
- d) Contact the student's natural parents from time to time informing them of their son/daughter's progress.
- e) Approve any travel the student wishes to make outside the District. If the student is likely to miss school for a Rotary event then the Counsellor should give them a note to take into school explaining the circumstances.
- f) When Student changes host, ask both families if they need any help with the move and ensure District are advised of change of address and contact numbers when student moves to a new host family.
- g) Encourage the student to attend as many Rotary meetings as possible. The more contacts they make within the host club the more opportunities they will have. Ensure that the Club does not forget the student's birthday and also remembers them at Christmas.
- h) Start a wish list of what the student would like to do or where they want to go and encourage Club members to help the student fulfil their dreams.
- i) Counsellors should be acquainted with the rules of the program and should ensure that the student abides by them, however they are there to guide and assist the student, rather than dictate each move they make.
- j) There are occasions where hosts may have a pre-arranged time away or an event requiring absence of one night or more where it is not possible and/or practical for the student to attend. Hosts must be encouraged to advise the Counsellor of such and it is the responsibility of the Counsellor to arrange temporary accommodation.
- k) When a student moves from one host to another, hold a meeting of both hosts, and if possible future hosts, to discuss any problems that may have arisen.
- l) Write to each host after they have completed their term of hosting thanking them for their undertaking and enclosing their Post Exchange Evaluation, asking them to return it to the Counsellor. This is useful feedback for the Counsellor, and gives a "feel good" opportunity for hosting families, who may well consider taking it up again in the future.

- m) If the Counsellor has any concerns about the student s/he should complete *CP10D: Record of Concerns form* which is downloadable from *CP10: Dealing with Incidents* and return it quickly to the DYEO.

Problems may arise in a number of ways:

It sometimes happens that the Counsellor and the student cannot get along. If this happens then the Counsellor should step aside in favour of another where there can be a happier relationship. The Counsellor should not take this as an indication of inefficiency as there can be times when personalities clash for no apparent reason.

There may also be a problem between a student and a host family. If this occurs then the Counsellor should have another host family on standby or even move the student in with them, the Club President or Club YEO's family to enable the cause of the problem to be established.

If a student breaks the rules of the programme then the Club should not be afraid of sending them home. Before taking the final decision for such action a full explanation of the circumstances should be discussed with the Host Club President following which the District YE Chairman and to the District Governor should be informed and their support sought. Early returns should be managed delicately and always with the full knowledge of the sponsoring District and/or Club

