

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

This purpose of this document is to help Counsellors understand how they can fulfill their role, and to make sense of the information which they will receive.

This information will be provided in electronic form in a Dropbox Folder which is shared with the Counsellor. It covers three areas:

1. Materials relevant to the role of Counsellor:

L7A: The Counsellor Preparation Pack for LTEP: ([download from here](#))

- Jargon & Abbreviations in Youth Exchange
- Overview of Youth Exchange for Counsellors & Host Families
- The Role of the Counsellor for LTEP
- Record of Concern – for Hosts, Counsellors etc.

2. Copies of Orientation materials sent by the DYEO to the Inbound student (for Counsellor information and action where indicated below:

L10A: Preparation Pack for Inbound LTEP Students (sent before the student leaves home):

- Preparation & What to Bring - Advice for Inbound LTEP Students
- ** Rules & Behaviour Guidelines for Inbound LTEP Students
- **Permission to Travel within RIBI
- **Photography & Video Consent Form
- Insurance for Inbound Students
- Travel Insurance for Students

L10B: Welcome Pack for Inbound LTEP Students (given to the student when they arrive):

- Emergency Contact Information
- Contacts list
- Rotary information
- Advice for Inbound LTEP students
- Coping with Culture Shock
- Student Incident Report

3. R4A: The Inbound Student Records Folder

contains all the documentation relating to the student, including the application form, the Wish list and anything medical etc for reference and is stored indefinitely after the Exchange.

Students will return the documents marked **signed by themselves and their parents. Counsellors are asked to chase and upload them into the student's Records Folder.

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, and whether you are the first, middle, or final host family for this student, here are some suggestions that previous host parents have provided to us:

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

The document *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 the first six months of 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!

Encourage your student to **get involved**. School extracurricular activities, sports, community activities and family activities may be new and unfamiliar to your student, and could be very “different” from those activities he or she was involved in back home. If you sense that your student is bored and reluctant to participate in available activities, it may simply be because no one has asked him or her to join in. Try to introduce the student to some people who will help overcome this reluctance.

Understand “culture shock”, and help your student learn *our* culture. The sheet entitled ‘*L14 - 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 from 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 appraised 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.

Being the First Host Family

While being “first” often provides the greatest challenges for dealing with things like language difficulties and cultural differences, it also provides the opportunity to form a lasting emotional bond with the student that can continue after the student moves on to subsequent host families, since he or she will remain part of your community for the balance of the exchange year.

When the time comes for the student to move on, be prepared for the emotions that come with separation and fear of something new, both for the student and you. It will help to make this transition go smoothly if the student has met the new family, perhaps first in your home, and then later for a visit in the next host family home, to provide opportunities to become familiar with the family and surroundings.

Once your student has moved, maintain contact without undermining the development of relationships with the next family. Inviting your student to share special family events, like birthdays, will reinforce the relationship you developed earlier, and will usually be welcomed by the current host family, just as you welcomed others’ invitations to the student when part of your family.

When it is finally time for your student to return home to his or her own family, they will be leaving not one but several **families** that they will consider “home” for the rest of their lives.

Being the Final Host Family

Being the host family at the conclusion of the exchange year could involve dealing with many of the same emotions the student had upon arrival, but this time caused by the realization that the “familiar” is now *our* culture, and the “unknown” involves *returning home*. Understand that the exchange student **must** return home at the conclusion of the exchange year as a condition of the exchange program. **A sign of a successful exchange is the student’s reluctance to go home, and we wouldn’t want it any other way.**

You may need to help your student prepare mentally for this departure, in addition to the many physical aids that will be needed. **Start by selecting an actual departure date** that everyone involved agrees with (including the student’s parents), and help the student make the necessary airlines reservations. (Although we require all students to have round-trip airlines tickets, some airlines can only book flights 6-9 months in advance, and many students must change the initial return date once they know graduation and Tour dates, etc.). As the departure date approaches, help the student with packing and luggage, recognizing that much has been collected since their arrival, and it may be necessary to ship some of the student’s possessions home to keep suitcases below the airlines’ quantity and weight limits.

Help the student wrap up any financial obligations with you and others, especially regarding long-distance telephone charges. Use of a pre-purchased phone card, or having the student make final calls collect, will minimize phone charges appearing on your telephone bill after the student has departed. Discuss with the student and the Rotary Club Counsellor the return of the student’s emergency fund.

Involve the prior host families, and the host Rotary club, in planning a farewell event before the student departs and allow sufficient flexibility in your schedule during the final few days to provide your student with the opportunity to say goodbye to the many friends made during the past year. In many cases, these “good-byes” will be even harder for the student than those said 11 or 12

months earlier, and your understanding and support will make this a happy time for everyone involved.

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.

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 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.

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(** indicates documents which the student & parents are required to sign and return.)

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3. Materials relevant to the student for Host Family information, to which Hosts may add.

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