



Lions Clubs International

Host Family Handbook

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Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a Lions Clubs International Youth Camps and Exchange (YCE)

Host Family! Being a Host Family to an Exchange Youth (ages 15-22) through the YCE program is guaranteed to be a rewarding experience as you share in each other's culture through conversations, cultural activities and participation in everyday life.

This handbook is designed to help you understand your Host Family roles and responsibilities. It includes the rules and expectations necessary for making the YCE experience successful for all participating parties.

Most Host Clubs offer detailed orientation sessions that cover the more particular nuances of the local YCE program. Please consider attending these in-depth orientation sessions if they are offered by your local Host Club.

Youth protection

- All participating Host Families of the Lions International YCE program are expected to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate;
- Please contact your local YCE Chairperson to learn more about how you can be better prepared for reporting and handling incidents, such as allegations of abuse or harassment.
- Please contact your local YCE Chairperson to learn more about how you can be better prepared for crisis management in the event of an emergency such as a natural disaster and/or civil or political unrest; and
- Notwithstanding any policies or procedures provided by Lions International, Host Families must comply with all local laws and regulations regarding youth protection.

Youth Camps and Exchange

History

The Youth Exchange Program was authorized by the Lions International Board of Directors in early 1961 after a successful summer-long exchange program between Lions in the United States and Japan. Later, the Youth Camp Program was authorized in 1974. Both aspects of the program were established for the purpose of furthering Lions International's first objective of "creating and fostering a spirit of understanding among peoples of the world."

Definition of program

YCE does not involve tourism, academic study or employment. Instead, youth are encouraged to use their travel opportunity to share their own culture while experiencing a new one. The YCE program is comprised of two major parts: international exchanges and international camps.



The role of a Host Family

As the Host Family, you must be willing to intentionally share your lifestyle and culture with the visiting youth, including them in all family activities.

You should plan an assortment of cultural activities that may include, but are not limited to, museums, nature parks or centers, local tours, sports, musical events, etc.

- Planning activities with other Host Families is encouraged.
- Be mindful that long day (or multiple day) trips may not be of interest to the youth. Try to show them places you and your family like to visit.
- It is strongly recommended that each member of your family attend and participate in any in-person or electronic Host Family orientations or social events before and/or after the hosting experience.



Expectations of a Host Family

Room and board

- You are expected to provide room and board for the youth. It is recommended that youth be roomed with youth of similar ages and similar genders. Meals should be balanced and healthy.

Transportation

- Typically, you are responsible for all of the youth's transportation during the exchange. Travel may include but is not limited to, transfers to and from the airport or train station, transfers to other Host Families or International Camp, transportation to and from any planned activities by you and/or the Host Club.

Financial responsibilities

- Payment for cultural activities is dependent on the agreement made between you, the youth and the Host Club.
- Some programs offer stipends or scholarships for participating Host Families.
- Be sure to contact your local YCE Chairperson or coordinating Host Club for more information.

Data protection and handling of personal data and social media

- Make sure that the data you have on the youth is adequately protected to meet the obligations under local data privacy laws.
- We recommend that you receive written consent to post pictures and videos taken during the youth's YCE experience with you on social media.

Selecting an Exchange Youth

- The criteria for selecting youth differs from YCE program to YCE program.
- Hosting a youth is dependent upon desired age, gender, interests and nationality and upon the availability of the youth meeting those requirements.
- Your local YCE Chairperson will advise you of available youth or if arranged early enough, may seek a youth meeting your request.

Before hosting

Correspondence

- It is highly encouraged that you initiate correspondence with the youth once you have been matched. Correspondence may include letters, pictures and anything else you would like to share about your family, life and home with the youth. Describe the community, and activities you may be interested in doing with them.
- Help them pack for their trip (i.e., help them prepare for the weather or activities they will be doing).
- It is encouraged that you correspond in the language you intend to use throughout the entire exchange experience.
- If incompatibilities are discovered, contact the hosting YCE Chairperson immediately.
- Please note that youth may have food restrictions related to their religion or culture. It is recommended that you determine those restrictions before the youth arrives.
 - Alternatively, if your family has restrictions on food due to religion or culture, please make this clear to the youth before they arrive.
- Keep in mind, that due to culture, some communication is gender-based.
 - For example, females may be more comfortable corresponding with females.

Cultural preparation

- Attempt to learn about the youth's life and culture before their arrival. The more you are prepared, the better you may be able to handle the culture shock the youth could experience when they arrive.

Insurance

- The Sponsor Club and youth's family are responsible for the youth's appropriate medical and travel insurance before arriving (this insurance should be confirmed with the local sending YCE Chairperson).
- The YCE Program and its participating affiliates are covered by the general Lions International insurance liability. Meaning, Lions International's general liability insurance would likely respond in the event of an accident or emergency if a program affiliate such as a Host Family was deemed legally liable for damages.
- It is often recommended that youth secure more insurance than what is covered under the Lions International general liability insurance.
- This is important to determine before the youth travels. Your family, the Host Club, Sponsor Club and YCE Chairperson together need to distinguish whether sufficient insurance exists based on the planned local activities and provide each other with all of the necessary details such as policy number, phone numbers or local branches of the youth's chosen insurance company.
- The youth must register their insurance with the hosting multiple district, district or club, and are encouraged to make a copy of insurance, passport and flight arrangements to be carried with them in case of loss of originals.
- Please contact your local YCE Chairperson or coordinating Host Club for more information.

Host Family orientation and social gatherings

- It is highly recommended that you stay in constant contact with the Host Club local YCE Chairperson for coordinating purposes.
- Each of the family members should attend any and all orientations provided by the local YCE program.
- Some YCE programs coordinate Host Family activities before and after the youth arrive/leave. Take advantage of this opportunity to make connections with people who will also be hosting. They may be a good resource of knowledge throughout the duration of your hosting experience.

During hosting

Arrival

- Devise a specific plan of where and when to meet the youth at the airport or train station.
 - Be sure the youth is prepared with these plans, tickets and local currency.
- Be aware of how sensitive the youth may be when they arrive. For some youth, they may have an immediate reaction of culture shock to the different smells, clothing and languages spoken.
- It is highly recommended that the person who has been corresponding with the youth, is present for the airport pickup.
 - If that is not possible, ensure that the youth receive a photograph and name of the person picking them up.
- Prepare a plan with the youth in the event of scheduling delays, loss of luggage or security issues.
- Have the youth call and/or write, via social media/email, to their parents/guardians immediately upon arrival to let them know the youth are safe.

Jet lag

- Don't forget that if the youth has traveled across time zones, the youth may have jet lag (the more time zones crossed, the tougher the jet lag may be).
- Try not to plan too many activities for the first two days of their stay in order to accommodate them while their body adjusts to the local time.

Homesickness

- Allow the youth a few days to acclimate before feeling alarmed about homesickness.
 - Plan low-energy activities that are also fun and engaging in the local culture such as watching movies or playing board games.
- Signs of homesickness: withdrawn, uncommunicative or moody, talk often about home, excessive sleeping, marked weight gain or loss, acute depression or other irregular behavior.
- It is important to make the youth feel as if they are part of your family in the most natural way possible. This can help the youth feel safer and "at home".
- Should the behavior intensify, contact the local YCE Chairperson.
- Be mindful of the youth's spirituality. If it differs from your own, it may be welcoming for you to provide a list of places of worship, or place within your home for them to appropriately practice their respective spirituality. This may also help reduce homesickness.

Language

- Remember that the youth may not be fluent in the language spoken in your home.
- Be patient, speak slowly and avoid slang until the youth is more comfortable and has had time to adjust to the new language.
- Note that when the youth is excessively nodding, it usually means that they do not understand.

Accidents/illness or emergencies

- Medical emergencies may happen during the youth's stay.
- Make yourself aware of the copied insurance information the youth has in case it is needed quickly. It should accompany the youth at all times.
- The youth application form identifies if you or the YCE Chairperson has permission to seek medical attention for the youth.
 - The sending and local YCE Chairpersons should be contacted immediately.
 - This form also indicates who may be responsible for payment of any medical, accident or illness not covered by insurance.
- The YCE Chairperson should be in charge of relating medical news to the youth's parents.
- The Application Form contains information about eventual sickness, allergies and food intolerances.
 - Please check and prepare before their arrival that the youth has all of their required prescription medicines.

Host Family activities

- Give the youth a tour! Show them their bed (or room). Show them how to work the appliances. Give them the house rules. You may want to give them a map of your community, and a list of important codes and passwords for the house they should know.
- Note that the youth are to be treated as if they are part of the family, not a guest. Therefore, if there are chores or other duties expected of them, make that clear to them.
- Make sure to provide a safe space for important belongings such as money and their important travel documents.
- Encourage the youth to share their cultures with you about food, whether it be a meal or proper table manners in their culture. This is a great way to help with homesickness as well as foster a spirit of understanding and expectations.
- Giving the youth a welcome gift is an excellent way to welcome the youth into your home, but gifts should be within a reasonable price range.
- Remember to not leave the youth alone for an extended period of time. For example, if there are other youth in the home that have school, and the guardians in the house have to work, be sure to make other arrangements for the youth so they are not alone.
 - Put together a fun, active and cultural itinerary of activities for the youth.
 - This could include activities with other Host Families in the area so that youth do not feel alone.
- When the youth are participating in activities with other youth (such as youth outings or camp), they should be engaging with each other, not communicating with home.

Host Clubs

- Throughout the hosting experience, the Host Club should be available if questions, comments or concerns arise.
- It is highly encouraged that the youth participate in Host Club activities such as meetings or service projects.

Expectations of Exchange Youth

- Respect and honor family house rules.
- Follow the local laws and regulations of the country, state/province or city they are visiting.
- It is prohibited for youth to operate motorized vehicles while participating in the YCE program.
- The use of drugs is strictly prohibited during the YCE Program.
- The use of alcohol and tobacco is dependent on the local laws for youth of their age, the rules of the Host Family and the rules of the local YCE program.
- Romantic relationships should be discouraged.
- It is strictly prohibited for the YCE program for there to be unexpected visitors (such as friends and family unaffiliated with the YCE program).

Changing Host Families

- Keep in mind that some youth stay with more than one Host Family throughout their YCE experience.
- Please respect the next Host Family after you by limiting communication with the youth to allow them the full experience of the exchange.
 - Alternatively, if you are the next Host Family for a youth, keep in mind that this move will be another fairly large change for the youth.
- Correspond and coordinate with other Host Families to plan different activities, and to know when moves are happening between Host Families.

International Youth Camp

- Similar to changing Host Families, some youth may be attending a camp in the middle of their exchange experience with you.
- Be sure to know the logistics for when camp begins and ends to coordinate the transportation of the youth.
- Host Families are welcome to visit camp on visitors' days, only.

Early release or extended travel

- Early release is defined as:
 - The youth need to leave for a medical or family emergency.
- Extended travel is defined as:
 - The youth freely traveling before or after the YCE program dates
- Some programs strictly prohibit extended travel.
- Should your program allow early release or extended travel, please be sure to contact your local YCE Chairperson or coordinating Host Club for more information about how to handle those situations.
 - Most early release and extended travels are announced prior to arrival and forms are completed by the youth and their families.
 - The sending YCE Chairperson should also be aware of this arrangement.

Incompatibility with Host Family or need for removal of the Exchange Youth

- If relations between your family and the youth become extremely difficult, the matter should be handled tactfully by the Host Club or YCE Chairperson.
 - In extreme situations, it could become necessary to arrange to return the youth to their home.
- If your family or another Host Family withdraws from the program after a commitment has been made to host a youth, the youth will be moved to a new Host Family home by the Host Club or YCE Chairperson.

After hosting

Departure

- You should try to be at the departure of the youth. This should help ease their transition back home.

Upon their return

- Once the youth returns home, be sure to maintain contact with them.
- Learn about how to become a Lion or a Leo member!
- Be sure to provide the local Host Club with a review of your experience including questions, comments and concerns. The only way to improve the program is with feedback from you!

Thank you!

A roaring “thank you” from the YCE Lions around the world for your participation in this program! Because of you, Lions are one step closer, “to creating and fostering a spirit of understanding among peoples of the world.”

Host Family checklist

Before the Exchange Youth(s) arrives

I have worked with the local YCE Chairperson or Host Club to:

- Complete my home interview and screening
- Schedule the Host Club country presentation (if applicable)
- Schedule several events with the Host Club including a service project the youth can attend
- Receive plans in case of a medical, political/civil unrest or natural disaster emergency
 - Made the outgoing/incoming YCE Chairpersons, Host Club and Sponsor Club aware of these plans
- Understand my financial responsibility as a Host Family
- Attend Host Family orientation and Host Family social events

I have prepared my home for the Exchange Youth(s) with:

- A bed
- A bedroom
- Place for valuables to be stored
- Food
- Cultural activities schedule
- List of house rules, keys, passwords and codes
- List of chores expected of youth

Regarding the Exchange Youth(s), I have:

- Corresponded with the youth
- Prepared them about our culture, what to expect and what to pack
- Learned about their culture
- Ensured they have the original copies of the proper medical and travel insurance cards, and travel documents (flight and/or train information and passport)
- Established a pick-up plan with the youth at the airport and/or train station
- Determined a plan for if there are delay, luggage or security issues once they arrive

Regarding the arrival and stay of the Exchange Youth(s), I have:

- Checked flight times
- Checked flight status
- Checked train times (if applicable)
- Checked train status (if applicable)
- Had the youth contact their parents/guardians to let them know they arrived safely
- Provided time to recover from jet lag
- Given them the house rules and expectations
- Made the youth aware that there are emergencies plans if needed
- Share the list of fun activities for them to look forward to
- Help coordinate between youth and Host Club for country presentation and activities
- Prepared plans for transporting youth to a new Host Family or international youth camp
- Had fun!

When the Exchange Youth(s) leave

Regarding the departure and after the stay of Exchange Youth(s), I have:

- Checked flight time
- Checked flight status
- Checked train time
- Checked train status
- Discussed and established a plan for the departure of the youth from my home
- Continued to correspond with youth once they've returned home
- Received information and learned how to become a Lion or Leo member
- Provided the local Host Club or local YCE Chairperson with a review of my experience including questions, comments and concerns