



Rotary Youth Exchange District 5360



Inbound Counsellor Handbook

Hosting inbound exchange students is a process that begins before the student arrives in Canada and continues after the student's return home. The duties... include serving as the student's primary Rotary contact, easing his or her transition into the country and the community through regular personal contact throughout the year.

~Excerpt from Youth Exchange Handbook

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Role of the Inbound Counsellor

The Inbound Counsellor acts as the liaison between the Inbound Student, the Rotary Club, and the District Youth Exchange Committee. The work for this role begins in the spring when the application for the Inbound Student arrives at your club and continues until the student has safely returned home over a year later.

You will be the Inbound student's first point of contact for any problems or concerns the student may have, and it is important that the student feels he or she can trust you.

Your relationship with the Inbound student sets the tone for the student's relationship with your Rotary Club. This relationship needs mutual trust and respect to work, but it can be a rewarding relationship that continues long after the student's exchange year has ended.

Encourage other members of your Rotary Club to include the student in activities with their families. This is important to making the current student feel welcome and part of your club and it also serves as a tool for recruiting future host families.

While the student is here, you should visit with him or her regularly (weekly or bi-weekly) to address any concerns as they arise and to keep up-to-date with what the Inbound student is doing, and to make sure the student is attending school (one of the terms of the student visa the student is here on)

Arrange for the student to make regular reports to your Rotary Club about his or her activities and goals for the exchange. When it is time for the student to change host families, help with the move.

If the Inbound student wishes to travel, there may be paperwork required by the District Youth Exchange Committee. It is your responsibility to make sure that the correct procedures are followed.



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Three-year Overview

Being an Inbound Counsellor is a three-year commitment for each student, but the responsibilities each year are different. The three years roughly correspond to the Rotary Calendar.

The **first year**, your club is preparing for your student's arrival. You must organize host families, make preliminary arrangements with the school, and ensure that the Guarantee Form is processed in a timely manner. Host families must be interviewed and have the necessary police/RCMP clearance.

The **second year**, your student is here as an *Inbound*. For the next year, you must work with the student, the host families, your club, the school, and the District Youth Exchange Committee to ensure that the exchange is successful.

The **third year**, your student has returned home, and although your official responsibilities to the student are complete, maintaining contact with the student will be rewarding for you and the student.

See the current Inbound Calendar of Events, available at www.yex5360.org for exact deadlines.



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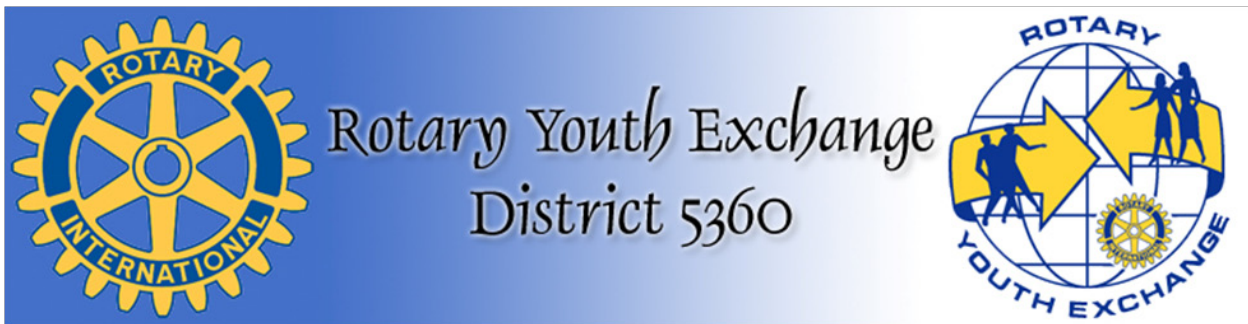
Detailed Calendar: Year One

February

- Start recruiting host families for the coming year. You need to line up four families to host the exchange student for approximately three months each. **It is not appropriate for the Inbound Counsellor to be a host family.** Rotary International has screening guidelines for host families that must be met.
 - Some of this can be accomplished all at once, by bringing the host families together for a pot-luck evening to do paperwork (police clearance forms) and awareness training. This is also a good way for the host families to get to know each other and form a support network for each other

March

- The district committee starts assigning Inbound Students to clubs. You will receive the application form of the student you have been assigned. The student should be arriving on or before August 10.
- When you receive the paperwork, you will also find out which Student Coordinator from the District Committee will be working with you and your Inbound student. Take advantage of his or her expertise to help you through the process of finalizing the necessary paperwork.
- Inbound forms and paperwork must be taken to the school as soon as possible. At this time, also start working with the Guidance Counsellor to make preliminary plans for the student's year at school. If the school has a handbook for students, pick one up for your reference, and to share with the student when he or she arrives.
- The confirmation letter from the school must be **stamped by the school and signed in blue ink by the principal.** Some school districts have additional requirements to accept the student. By starting as soon as you receive the forms, the Inbound student will get the guarantee form back sooner.



- The completed guarantee form is required for the student to apply for his or her student visa. Have all paperwork printed and signed in **blue** ink and always have double copies signed in case one gets lost in the mail.
- If requested by the school, list yourself as the guardian for the Inbound student.

April

- Remember to return all completed forms to your Student Coordinator ASAP. The sooner they are returned, the more likely it is that your Inbound Student will have everything in place for an on-time arrival in Canada.
- You are the key contact, not only with the student and the school, but with your Rotary Club and the District Youth Exchange Committee. Any communication your Rotary club needs to have with the District Youth Exchange Committee should be through you.

June

- Register your student in classes for September. Meet with the school guidance counsellor and share the relevant information from the Inbound Student's application form (hobbies and interests). Register the student in classes where the student can meet and interact with Canadian students, such as sports, music, band, drama, art etc.
- Your Rotary Club's President-Elect will receive a club commitment form for the following year. If your club is planning to continue participating in Youth Exchange this form must be completed and returned to the district (the deadline is usually around August 15)



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Detailed Calendar: Year Two

July-August

- The Inbound Student should arrive before the August Orientation Weekend. You must pick up the student at the airport. If other members of your Rotary Club are available to greet the student at the airport, this goes a long way to make your student feel welcome.
- The Inbound Student should live with you not more than the first two weeks. This gives you, your family, and the student a chance to get to know each other. **You cannot be one of the host families for the student if you are the Inbound Counsellor. Part of your role is to be the student's Rotary contact outside of the host families.**
 - If for *any* reason the student must be removed from a host family, you must be able to take the student into your home until a new host family is arranged.
- The Inbound Student and Counsellor are both required to attend the Re-Entry/Orientation weekend in August. At this time the contract which the Inbound Student must sign will be discussed, and you will be told when the completed contract must be submitted to the District Youth Exchange Committee. It is a good idea to provide copies of the contract to the student, the host families, and any other Rotarians that are including the Inbound Student in activities.
 - If the student has not yet arrived in time for the Orientation weekend you or someone from your club must still attend the relevant sessions at the Orientation.
- You may wish to contact the student's Outbound Counsellor in his or her home country and keep in touch over the next year.
- The Inbound Student should have brought a \$500.00 emergency fund with him or her. Deposit this into a bank account with both your signatures required for withdrawals. This is emergency money which must be



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replenished ASAP if it is used. An example of an emergency that may require money is if the student needs to replace his or her passport.

- Ask the Inbound student if he or she has any health issues not listed on the application form. Make sure you have a copy of the student's health insurance information, and that you understand what needs to be done in case of an emergency. The insurance information should be shared with the host families as well. If you and the student are not of the same sex, please include your spouse or another Rotarian (of the same sex as the student) in these discussions.
- The student's passport should be stored in a secure location, such as a safe deposit box. If photo ID is required, an Alberta ID card can be obtained from a registry office. Proof of enrolment at school will be required.

August-September

- Finalize the student's school enrolment and work with both the Guidance Counsellor and the student to finalize his or her class selections. Remember that the Inbound Student should be enrolled in classes where he or she will easily meet other students and be able to participate. Language skills need to be taken into consideration when choosing courses: it may be beneficial to enrol the student in classes at a different level than he or she has completed at home.
- Advise the school that the student will be required to attend Rotary meetings and this could impact attendance at classes on a weekly basis.
- Remind the guidance counsellor that this school year does not count for the Inbound student's academic record in his or her home country; the focus of the Rotary Youth Exchange is the experiences.
- Remind the student that although this year does not count for his or her academic record, he or she is still required to attend school and participate. This will also make it easier for the student to make friends.



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- Your Rotary Club should provide the student with a bus pass, or ensure that his or her monthly allowance is sufficient to cover the cost of a pass. The monthly allowance is intended to cover any incidental expenses that the student will incur, and is generally between \$100.00 and \$200.00 per month.
- The Inbound student is expected to attend Rotary meetings, so if you are unable to provide transportation each week, please arrange this with other members of your club. Include as many Rotarians as possible in this to give them a chance to get to know the student.
- Shop for clothing for the student if required. Some clubs keep clothing from previous exchange students (particularly winter gear) so the Inbound student does not need to buy clothes he or she will not need after leaving Canada.
- Discuss the expectations Rotary and your Rotary Club have with the student. The rules are in place to protect the student from harm, but breaking some rules could result in criminal charges and lengthy court cases.
- Discuss limiting how often the student uses email, Skype and other forms of electronic communication with people in his or her home country. Too much of this will detract from the time the student could have experiencing Canada. Articles about Culture Shock and Inbound Syndrome have been included in this manual for your reference.
- Take the Inbound student to the first host family and if requested by them, help go through the First Night Questions. For a link to a web site that has these questions translated into multiple languages, see www.yex5360.org.
 - Take the Inbound student to his or her first Rotary meeting. When you introduce the student to the club, include an introduction of some of



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the student's interests and goals. A great way to get more club members involved is to bring a calendar and ask club members to book time and activities with the Inbound Student.

- Arrange for the Inbound Student to do a presentation to your Rotary Club in the early fall. This is a great way for members of your Rotary Club to get to know more about the student and take an active interest in his or her exchange experience.

September-October

- All Inbound students must attend the orientation day held in Calgary. The orientation will cover information about Youth Protection, rules, expectations etc.
- The student may not be expected to attend school during mid-term examinations. If this is the case, it is a great opportunity for other members of the Rotary Club to plan activities with the student.

November

- This is often when the *Middle Wave of Culture Shock* begins to set in (see the article included in this manual). One of the best ways to counter homesickness is to keep busy.
- Encourage the Inbound student to plan activities with school friends. Inbound students will naturally get involved with other exchange students, but the student is missing out on part of the experience if he or she does not make Canadian friends. By getting involved in school and community activities or sports, they will achieve a good balance.

December-January

- The Inbound student may attend WinterFest in Calgary, organized and hosted by the Senior Rotex of District 5360.
- Confirm the date of the Inbound student's return flight—many tickets have a date that is too early, and must be rebooked. The student visa allows for



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no longer than 12 months from the date of entry. Find out when the Inbound student is expected back by his or her sponsoring district. Review the section of the Inbound student's contract regarding the length of stay.

- Many students may wish to stay long enough to attend the Calgary Stampede, a world-class event.
- If the Inbound student will have time off during final exams, help plan activities to keep the student busy. This is a good time of year to develop a "wish list" of things the student would like to do between now and his or her return date. Share this list with your Rotary Club and see how many things you can help the student achieve.

February

- If your club has committed to hosting another student in the upcoming year, the process begins again for the next Inbound Counsellor. Ask the President-Elect to identify the YEX Counsellors for the next year—new counsellors should be encouraged to attend the Outbound Orientation in March.
- Ensure that the Inbound student is registered for the Outbound Orientation in March, and if you are not attending, arrange transportation to and from the orientation for your student.

March

- The Inbound student is required to attend and participate in the Outbound Orientation weekend in March. It is not mandatory for Inbound Counsellors to attend, however you are welcome to attend if you wish.

May/June

- The Inbound student is required to attend District Conference. Accommodation and itinerary will be arranged by the conference organizers.
- The Rocky Mountain Canoe Trip is a 10-day trip sanctioned by the District



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Youth Exchange Committee. Although optional, it is one of the highlights of the year for many students. This 10-day trip is organized by Augustana College in Camrose, and hosted by the Rotary Club of Stettler. The staff prepare a safe and positive learning environment for even the novice canoeist.

June

- This is the last full month that the Inbound student will be here. It is good to have the Inbound student speak at a meeting of your Rotary Club, to recount his or her year with you.
- The Inbound Student will be finished school in mid-June, before exams.



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Detailed Calendar: Year Two/Three

June-July

- Consider having the Inbound Student stay with you for the last week or two of his or her exchange. Discuss this possibility with the student and the final host family.
- Return the \$500.00 emergency fund to the student during his or her last week in Canada.
- Remind the student not to leave packing until the last minute, so there is time to weigh luggage and ship things home if needed. Check the weight restrictions for the airlines the student is flying with.
- If the passport and tickets have been kept for the student, have them ready to give the student at the airport.
- You should take the student to the airport. Other Rotarians, host families, and friends may also wish to see the Inbound Student off. You should be “on-call” until you hear that the student has arrived home safely.
- Departure can be difficult, and the Inbound student may not want to leave, but the student must get on the airplane.
- Encourage the student to maintain contact with your Rotary Club. Many long-term friendships have resulted from participation in the Rotary Youth Exchange.

Congratulations on helping the student experience a successful exchange. Keep in touch with each other!



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Culture Shock

By Dennis White, Ph.D.

Most of us are familiar with the term "culture shock". We may think of it as the temporary disorientation that comes from being exposed to a different language, different customs, food, etc. What we don't often realize is that it is usually a rather profound reaction to fairly significant other differences; in the way people view the world, in the way they think and what they value. Tourists often experience culture shock at a superficial level. People who actually live in another culture can experience culture shock as an on-going reaction and adaptation to basic differences. Rotary Youth Exchange Students, living and studying in a different culture, living in the homes of host families, often experience significant culture shock, sometimes on a continuous basis, throughout their stay abroad.

Most exchange students in year-long programs go through a fairly identifiable progression of adjustment to culture shock, although each student's experience is unique. It must be emphasized that while culture shock can be very uncomfortable, there is nothing wrong with it, or with the person experiencing it. It is also quite common for students to have a very positive and rewarding experience, despite having on-going adjustment problems with culture shock. Many would argue that the most rewarding exchanges come only when there is a pronounced experience of culture shock.

Culture shock usually involves at least four stages. It is quite common for these stages to repeat themselves as students become more and more successfully immersed in the host culture. These stages are:

1. **Excitement and Enthusiasm.** This is the feeling of excitement and enthusiasm that accompanies travel to a new place, seeing and doing so many new and different things, and meeting new people. It is most prominent at the beginning of the exchange year, but can repeat itself as students continue to have new experiences, like changing host families, meeting new students, or continued travel. Sometimes it can be the



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excitement that comes from developing a new skill or increased understanding of the host culture.

- 2. Irritability.** This is the stage most readily associated with culture shock and occurs when the initial excitement wears off and real differences become evident. These are differences that go beyond food and language, and they are often indescribable to the person experiencing them. No matter how understanding and accepting the student may try to be, there will be many times when they just don't like or understand why their host culture is the way it is, and they can't seem to make the feeling go away. Irritability can come at any time that a student is confronted with differences they may not have experienced or perceived previously.
- 3. Adaptation.** This is the longest, most difficult and most rewarding stage. This is when students learn to accept that they will have to adapt if they are going to be successful in their host culture. They work at adapting to customs and habits that they may not understand, and may not like. Sometimes even when they try very hard, they have difficulty, because so much of this adaptation depends on learning the native language. They know they are adjusting when they begin to think and speak using idiomatic expressions (expressions that have meaning beyond a literal translation). They know they are adjusting when they notice that they are doing things without thinking, and these are the very things they never thought they could become comfortable with. An example would be when someone from a very formal culture becomes comfortable standing very close to other people, frequently touching them and being touched, during a conversation. Adaptation is a continuous process, and it requires added attention as some of these newly discovered differences become apparent to the student.
- 4. Biculturalism.** This stage comes very near the end of the stay, or sometimes doesn't really emerge until the students return to their native

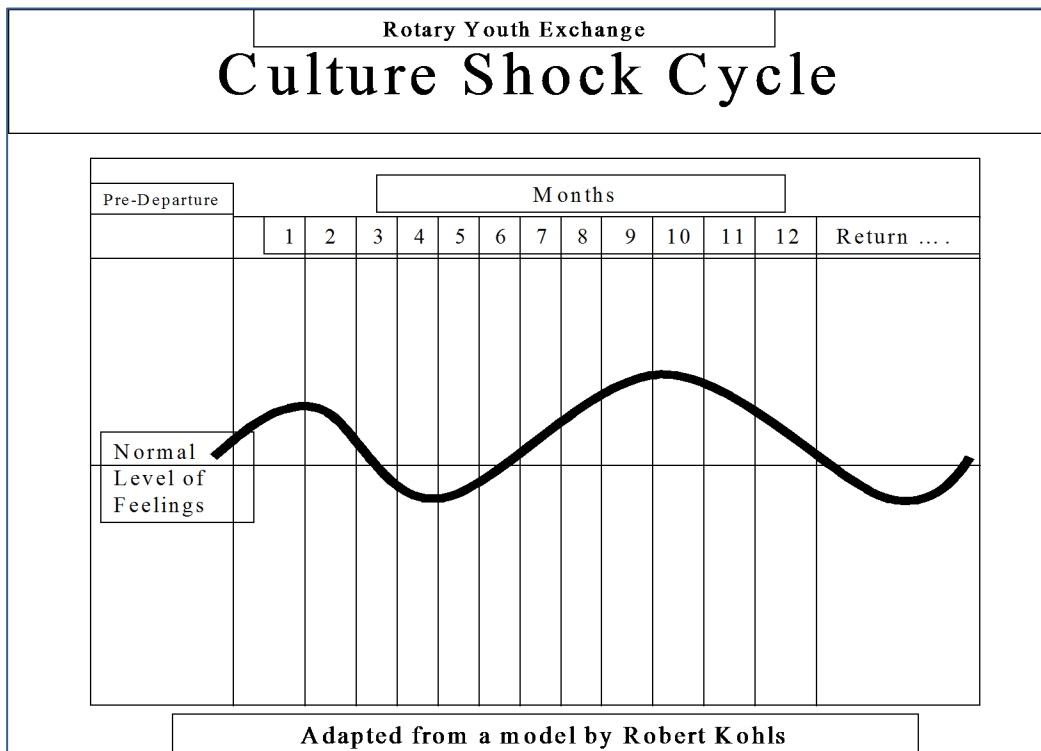


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countries. This is when they realize that they have become competent in another culture, and can see the world and function from another, very different point of view. When this stage emerges toward the end of the exchange year, it all seems very unfair to the student. Just as they are getting to experience the benefits of really knowing how to function well in their host culture, they have to go back home.

In Table 1 below, a model of a typical year of adaptation and adjustment to culture shock is pictured. The bold line that waves up and down represents the high and low feelings that students experience as they go through the various stages of adjustment to culture shock.



The first few months, including the period just before departure, coincide with the initial excitement stage. This peaks when the excitement wears off, or what is sometimes referred to as the time when the “honeymoon” is over. This is



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when reality sets in. This is when differences beyond superficial ones emerge, and irritability sets in, often verily quickly. At times, however, this irritability can come fairly slowly, but it is almost inevitable as the confrontation of one's own ethnocentrism occurs.

The lowest point typically comes at about four months, or near the middle of December, for students who start their exchange in August. For Christian students, this also coincides with what is probably the first Christmas they have spent away from their families. As a result, there is a sort of double negative of culture shock and homesickness.

Following the irritability stage is the much longer stage of gradual adjustment and adaptation where the student really learns the cultural tools necessary to function competently in the host country. This stage can actually involve the recycling of prior stages, with deeper and deeper understanding following periods of confusion, frustration and irritation.

The final stage, shown as coming around the time of returning home, can involve another plunge into a period of feeling low. If the student is not already sad at the prospect of returning home, "just when it's getting good", they will almost inevitably feel sad shortly after they return, when they go through a "reverse culture shock". This phenomenon is less well understood, and less often anticipated, but just as common as initial culture shock. The degree to which students go through reverse culture shock is a rough measure of the success of their immersion in the host culture, and not a sign that something is wrong. Only after experiencing reverse culture shock can students really appreciate the extent to which they have changed, and, as a result, the extent to which they have become truly bicultural.

The journey through culture shock has also been described as moving from **Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism**. All cultures are ethnocentric. They teach their members that their way is the right, natural and preferred way of doing things. When someone is exposed to another culture, with different values, behaviours



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and beliefs, there is a tendency to respond with defensiveness, labelling one's own practices as right and the other culture as wrong, silly or even stupid. Ethnorelativism is the awareness that develops as one realizes there are other valid ways of dealing with the world – whether we agree with them or not. When the exchange student gets through the initial denial (which is what happens in the irritability stage) they can begin to develop the skills necessary to adapt and be competent in the new culture. They then develop an ethnocentric world view. Their thinking may follow this progression:

- I don't like the way they do this – it's stupid.
- But they seem to be doing o.k. doing it this way.
- If I want to survive here, I'd better learn to do it this way.
- Now that I can do it this way, it doesn't seem so bad, even though I may still prefer to do it my way.

Developing the competence to succeed in another culture – that is – going through the process of culture shock, may be better understood by analyzing the process of developing competence at anything. Essentially, we go through four stages:

- **Unconscious Incompetence.** This is a stage when we not only don't know how to do something; we don't even know that we don't know how to do it. We are ignorant. Most of us think we know the proper way to greet someone. For example, when we go to another culture where greetings are done quite differently, we may just breeze along doing it our way, not even knowing that what we are doing may be perceived as rude or insulting.
- **Conscious Incompetence.** In this stage we may be aware that we are doing something wrong, but we just may not have the skills yet to do it properly. We may know that another culture spends more time in greetings inquiring about one's relatives, but if we are not skilled at the language, we may have trouble doing it, even if we want to.



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- **Conscious Competence.** In this stage we have developed the necessary skills to do what is necessary, but we still have to consciously remind ourselves to do it. We may think it is a waste of time to stop and discuss the well-being of all of our family members when we greet a friend, but we know how to, and more importantly, we know it is important to do so in this culture in order to appear “civilized” and polite.
- **Unconscious Competence.** In this stage we have become so skilled at the new cultural behaviour that we do it without thinking. We may find that it becomes very natural to stop and chat with friends as we greet them, inquiring about the mutual health of both families, as if it is the most natural thing in the world to do.

When exchange students get to this point – unconscious competence, they have gotten to the bicultural stage of adjustment to culture shock. They have developed an effective ethnorelative world view. So one can see that culture shock is not a problem to avoid. Instead, it is a necessary discomfort that one must go through to really experience the rich and varied joys of intercultural living.

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Dr. Dennis White is a psychologist, a former U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer and a member of the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, USA. He makes training presentations for Rotary Youth Exchange Programs and other intercultural training programs in many locations.

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The Inbound Syndrome

By Dennis White, Ph.D.

Webster's Dictionary: Syndrome – "a set of concurrent things (as emotions or actions) that usually form an identifiable pattern".

I have worked in the youth exchange program for many years, observing the experiences that Inbound students have and listening to the observations of other experienced youth exchange officers. As a result, I have come to believe that there is a phenomenon that might be called the "Inbound Syndrome". It is an almost universal tendency for Inbound students, and expatriates of any kind, to gather together and become very close when living in a foreign country. There are some tremendous benefits that can happen when Inbounds get together. Students, host families and Rotarians can learn about cultures from all over the world. Likewise, the Inbounds can develop friendships with other students that can last a lifetime.

I want to make it very clear that this bonding can be very emotionally moving – because seeing young people from all over the world getting to know one another in peace is an incredible thing. In itself it is a very positive outcome of the youth exchange program. When Inbounds attend any district event, Rotarians who have had no other exposure to Youth Exchange see this happy camaraderie as a living example of international good will and understanding and they are immediately impressed. Inbound students themselves will often say that the highlight of their year in the host country (regardless of the country) was the time they got to spend with other Inbounds. Sometimes Rotarians will respond to this positive feedback by increasing the opportunities to get together for the Inbounds in their districts.

However, despite all of the good that can come from this, there is a potential negative aspect to this phenomenon that is not always recognized and seldom discussed. Depending on where the student is in the progression of developing



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cultural competence, and depending on how much difficulty the student is having with this process, early and frequent contact among Inbounds can actually work against fitting in to the host culture. When this almost instant bonding among Inbound students happens, the Inbounds (or other expatriates) sometimes create a closeness that can be stronger than any they develop with people in their host country. There is nothing very unusual about this, if one understands the progressive stages of developing intercultural sensitivity when living in a new culture. Developing intercultural sensitivity, and ultimately, intercultural competence, is a continuous process of moving from the familiar and comfortable to the unfamiliar and uncomfortable. This is not a single, continuous process. Instead, it is a process of progress and setbacks, as new levels of understanding and skill develop.

Cultural awareness unfolds in layers. Two primary emotions that accompany this process of progress and set backs are, understandably, comfort and discomfort. Protracted periods of discomfort create an extremely strong urge to seek anything that will make one feel more comfortable. In a foreign country, the quickest way to feel more comfortable is to seek out someone else like you. This is true, regardless of the setting. It is the experience of Peace Corps Volunteers, missionaries, foreign-service workers, etc. The people who seem most familiar to an Inbound are other Inbounds, regardless of their nationality. What they have most in common, that no one else from the host culture has, is that they are foreigners. This is what causes the instant bonding. They are all outsiders, who are trying, with varying degrees of success, to fit in.

They are also all doing mostly the same thing, all under the organization of Rotary. When they get together, their comfort level almost always goes up. They have their own sub culture as Inbounds. There, they don't have to worry as much about making mistakes – everybody is making mistakes. They don't have to worry as much about language because they are usually more tolerant of people who might be having trouble communicating. They are more likely to share things about themselves and their countries, because they generally feel more



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acceptance and understanding from other Inbounds than many members of their host culture. Since all cultures are, by nature, ethnocentric, the Inbounds may have become irritated by the natural ethnocentric tendency on the part of people in the host culture to be critical of them as foreigners, from time to time.

Beneath the obvious cultural differences such as language, food and clothing are more subtle differences in values. These differences affect thought patterns and views of the world in ways that are often very subtle. As people first experience differences, at any level, there is an ethnocentric tendency to view the difference negatively. The difference is seen as silly, stupid, or even downright wrong. Fortunately, Inbound students, seeking an intercultural experience, are not only prepared for many of these initial differences, they are actively seeking them out. But there is almost no way to prepare for the more subtle, deep and significant differences one experiences when living for an extended time in another culture. And the more subtle and deep the differences are, the less aware the students are of what it is that is bothering them. They just know they are uncomfortable, so they seek comfort. If the student is having this kind of difficulty, they will be very vulnerable to seeking comfort in the company of other Inbounds. Other Inbounds will almost always make them feel more comfortable.

So what is wrong with wanting to be more comfortable? Usually nothing. But we all know why we advise newly arrived Inbounds against too much instant communication with family and friends back home, even though it might make them feel more comfortable. We know that if they keep regular and direct communication with home, they may feel more comfortable immediately, but that very comfort will direct them away from doing the work they need to do to become more culturally competent. It is easier in the short run to share feelings and communicate with friends and family whom they know than it is to struggle with the language and other cultural barriers that keep them from communicating effectively with people in the host culture. So, in this case, wanting to feel more comfortable is counter-productive to becoming



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acculturated. Likewise, spending too much time with other Inbounds may feel more comfortable, but is also counter-productive to becoming acculturated.

How should clubs, districts and Rotarians in Youth Exchange deal with this phenomenon? First, as often is the case, just being aware of this syndrome and the potential negative side of the issue can help. This helps the Rotarians understand the difference between what the students would like and what is in the best interest of their becoming immersed in the host culture itself. Rotarians with this awareness can accept that their Inbound students may be uncomfortable from time to time, but that the best solution is to encourage them to work hard to fit in their host culture rather than to turn to other Inbounds for comfort.

It is very tempting for Rotarians who want their Inbounds to be happy and to have a good time to succumb to the relatively easy route of more and more Inbound gatherings. And it is very inspirational to see their bonding at inbound gatherings. It is much harder to put limits on such gatherings, encouraging the Inbounds to learn to adapt to their surroundings, and in doing so, knowing that the Inbounds may be uncomfortable. There is a difference between trying to provide a good time and providing a good experience. A good experience may be painful at times, and may require much hard work.

The Inbound Syndrome, the tendency for Inbounds to gather together, is very common. There are obvious advantages that come from gatherings of Inbound students, and they are a very meaningful part of the Youth Exchange program. But there are also potential drawbacks, which, for some students, can be short-term gains in comfort at the expense of long term adjustment to the host culture. Rotarians involved in Youth Exchange should not eliminate Inbound gatherings. They should be sensitive to the potential problems, evaluating their programs accordingly and they should be sensitive to the possibility for some Inbound students, the Inbound Syndrome can be detrimental to really adjusting to the host culture.



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This article was written with extremely useful feedback and suggestions by other experienced Rotarians in Youth Exchange, particularly Bob White, Al Kalter and Woody Angst. Their contributions are appreciated.

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The Middle Wave of Culture Shock

By Dennis White, Ph.D.

Rotary Youth Exchange Students who departed for their host countries in late August are in the middle of their fourth month abroad around Christmas time. Despite the fact that most of them are having a very positive experience, this is a time when it is fairly typical for many of them to be experiencing a second “wave” of culture shock, longer and more difficult than that which they experienced upon arrival in their host country. When viewed from a psychological-intercultural point of view, there are some interesting challenges. What kind of experiences might they be having as they deal with becoming more immersed in their host cultures, as they deal with the subtleties of language and the progression of culture shock?

Most exchange students in year-long programs go through a fairly identifiable progression of adjustment to culture shock, although each student’s experience is unique. It should also be noted that while culture shock can be very uncomfortable, there is nothing wrong with it, or with the person experiencing it. And it is also quite common for students to be having a very positive and rewarding experience, despite having on-going adjustment problems with culture shock.

There are usually at least four stages that exchange students experience. It is quite common for these stages to repeat themselves as the students become more and more successfully immersed in the host culture. These stages are:

1. **Excitement and Enthusiasm.** This is the feeling of excitement and enthusiasm that accompanies travel to a new place, seeing and doing so many new and different things, and meeting new people. It is most prominent at the beginning of the exchange year, but can repeat itself as students continue to have new experiences, like changing host families, meeting new students, or continued travel. Sometimes it can be the excitement that comes from developing a new skill or increased understanding of the host culture.



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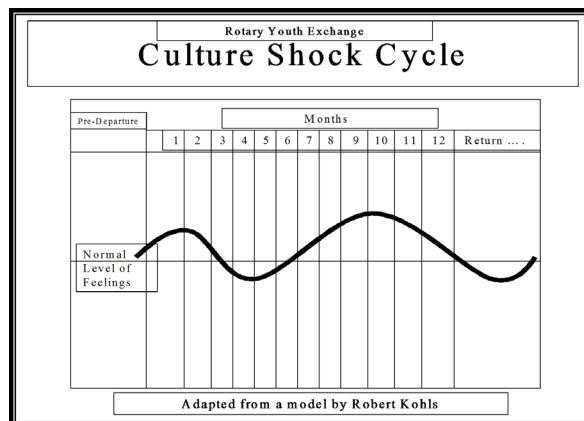
- 2. Irritability.** This is the stage most readily associated with culture shock and occurs when the initial excitement wears off and real differences become evident. These are differences that go beyond food and language, and they are often indescribable to the person experiencing them. No matter how understanding and accepting the student may try to be, there will be many times when they just don't like or understand why their host culture is the way it is, and they can't seem to make the feeling go away. Irritability can come at any time that a student is confronted with differences they may not have experienced or perceived previously.
- 3. Adaptation.** This is the longest, most difficult and most rewarding stage. This is when students learn to accept that they will have to adapt if they are going to be successful in their host culture. They work at adapting to customs and habits that they may not understand, and may not like. Sometimes even when they try very hard, they have difficulty, because so much of this adaptation depends on learning the native language. They know they are adjusting when they begin to think and speak using idiomatic expressions (expressions that have meaning beyond a literal translation). They know they are adjusting when they notice that they are doing things without thinking, and these are the very things they never thought they could become comfortable with. An example would be when someone from a very formal culture becomes comfortable standing very close to other people, frequently touching them and being touched, during a conversation. Adaptation is a continuous process, but requires more attention when some of these newly discovered differences become apparent to the student.
- 4. Biculturalism.** This stage comes very near the end of the stay, or sometimes doesn't really emerge until the student returns to their native country. This is when they realize that they have become competent in another culture, and can see the world and function from another, very different point of view. When this stage emerges toward the end of the exchange year, it all seems very unfair to the student. Just as they are getting to experience the benefits of really knowing how to function well in their host culture, they have to go back home.



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In **Table 1** below, a model of a typical year of adaptation and culture shock adjustment is pictured. The bold line that waves up and down represents the high and low feelings that students experience as they go through the various stages of adjustment to culture shock. The lowest point comes at about four months, or near the middle of December. For Christian students, this also coincides with what is probably the first Christmas they have spent away from their families. As a result, there is a sort of double negative of culture shock and homesickness.



What exactly is the student experiencing at this point? Most of them tell us that this is where the feeling of irritability is at its greatest, because they do not see an easy way to feel better. They have already adapted to the things that are the easiest to adapt to. They have learned to live with the food, even though they may not really like it. Or they may have learned to like it more than they ever expected. But they have not necessarily figured out how to get along better with a host family, or how to be included more in school activities. They may not know yet how to deal with differences in attitudes toward the sexes, or negative attitudes toward their native country's political activities.

Most probably, and certainly most importantly, they may have not yet learned enough language to really understand what is going on, or to communicate what they want to say to others. After a few months of this, it is very natural to get very frustrated and wish that everyone and everything just made more sense. It is also not likely that the student really understands



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that this is what is happening. They may just experience it as a global feeling of discomfort and dislike of the culture. Instead of saying “I’m hitting that low point of irritability in adjusting to culture shock”, they are more likely to say “I don’t like this place, these people, etc.”

At this point, they are just entering the longest, but most rewarding of the four stages of culture shock. Looking again at Table 1, we see that the eventual high that is achieved is actually higher than the first high that came in Stage 1, the initial Excitement Stage. This is where the students not only learn much more language and understand the culture much more. It is where they begin to learn much more about themselves. They get a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. They learn new coping skills or use existing ones that they may never have known they had. They may learn to enjoy reading or traveling in their city by themselves. They may develop hobbies like writing or playing a musical instrument. They may learn to initiate activities with other people that they may have thought themselves too shy to try.

It is the beginning of an exciting time, and a period where the time just seems to fly by. In three or four months they will be facing the reality that they will be returning home in a very short time, and it will come far too soon – just when they are getting really skilled as an exchange student. But at the beginning of this period, it is still fairly difficult, and it can be discouraging.

It can be helpful if Youth Exchange Officers/Counsellors and parents understand that this is what many students are going through at this time. They can be supportive of students first by acknowledging that it is normal and ok to be going through a low period at this time. They need to be reassured that there is nothing wrong with them or the host country just because they are feeling this way. It can be extremely helpful to a student in this stage to just have someone with whom they can express their feelings without fear of getting in trouble or offending anyone. It can also be helpful to point out to the student that this is probably the lowest point they will



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experience, and that things will begin to get better as they continue to work at adjusting. It won't be easy, but it is worth it.

The exchange experience can at times be compared to riding waves on a surfboard, with lots of ups and downs. The time from mid-December until about mid-March is the middle wave. If the student can hang on and stick with it, this longest of waves will crest at the top higher than they ever imagined possible.

About the author:

Dr. Dennis White is a psychologist, a former U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer and a member of the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, USA. He makes training presentations for Rotary Youth Exchange Programs and other intercultural training programs in many locations.

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Host Family Recruitment

By Lloyd Morris

The successful recruitment of qualified host families is a constant, ongoing process. It is not a once or twice a year effort. The clubs that have had the most success in this phase of the Youth Exchange program have recognized this fact and have defined their goals, developed methods, and committed the necessary resources and time to meet the goals. The suggestions detailed herein are by no means all inclusive of what works. They can be modified to reflect what works for your club. **BUT THEY ARE TIME PROVEN TECHNIQUES THAT DO WORK IF USED!**

1. **ROTARY CLUB COUNSELORS:** As is typical for most successful programs in Rotary, the YE program needs the commitment of the Club President, the Board of Directors, and the Chairman of International Service, the YE Officer, and his or her committee and particularly the club members. This commitment begins with a thorough understanding of the program by the club members AND their spouses. This understanding is most effectively gained in the involvement of your student with the activities of the club and its members.
2. **CLUB YOUTH EXCHANGE ORGANIZATION:** Clubs need to commit the resources necessary to effectively get the job done. This means budget, people, and time. Budget has not been seen as a substantial problem. However, the job of the YE program has at times fallen to one person, which can result in a problem in the lack of people and time categories. We recommend you spread the load by having a multi member committee in which one member of the committee is designated as the host family coordinator. He or she must agree to do the job and commit the time and effort necessary to do so (emphasize job is “coordinator”, not a 1-person task).



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3. **INBOUND STUDENT APPLICATION:** Inbound student applications should be carefully reviewed to see if the student's background and / or interests would suggest a potential host family. For example, a Swedish student noted that his hobby is competing in tri-athletic events. He was placed with a family who participated in this type of competition. A Japanese student was an accomplished pianist fit in perfectly with a family active in the local symphony.
4. **NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION:** The YE committee should schedule a representative to conduct orientations for new members of their club. The YE program should be explained with particular emphasis on how each new member can involve our inbound students with family activities and the requirements of a host family. Each new member should be asked if they would like to have the program explained to his or her family at a date in the near future and then follow up by setting up an appointment to do so. After meeting with the family, take the opportunity to ask if they might know of another family, perhaps a relative or neighbour, who would like to hear about the program. Get their names, have the host family help you make an appointment, and repeat the process.
5. **INVOLVING STUDENTS WITH CLUB MEMBERS:** The more your membership (including spouses) knows about our students, the better the chances of their being interested to be host families.
 - a. Have your student attend club meetings on a regular basis. Make sure they meet different members each time and play an active role in the meeting, such as greeting members at the door or assisting the Sergeant at Arms.
 - b. Have your student give a short (3 to 5 minute) presentation early on in their exchange (within the first 2 months). Do not be concerned if their English is limited; just have them write their talk down and practice with you several times before the presentation. The talk



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should focus on their background, interests, hobbies, and skills. Follow up with a single sheet biography on your student, including how he or she can be contacted and pass this out to the membership.

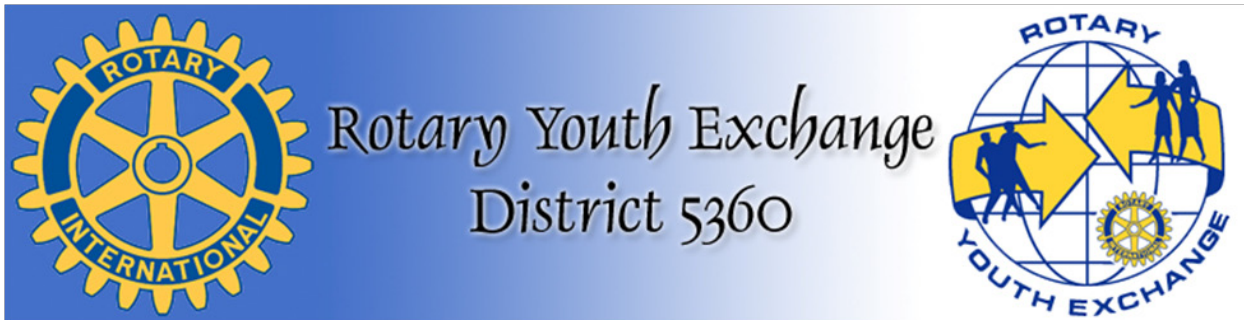
- c. Involve the student with club projects and activities. Make them a member of the Adopt-a-Highway team or the Christmas bell ringing or gift-wrapping committee, etc. This will require some coordination with the various club committees, but it gets the student involved with members and will lead to host families.
 - d. Have a fireside each year (written in Alaska) that is devoted to the YE program. Make sure all members of your committee and as many inbound, outbound, and rebound students attend as possible. Suggest that members bring their spouses and any family members that may be interested. Have information on the program available and include the students in the night's formal program.
 - e. Have the Program Committee set aside one meeting per year when the students can give their "formal" presentation to the club. Think beyond the standard slide presentation for ways to make this more interesting. For example, we have all known students with special talents. Encourage them to use these talents at this meeting.
6. **HOST FAMILIES:** Approach current and past host families and ask them if they can recommend potential host families to you. Ask them to help you set up a time and place to explain the program.
 7. **INBOUND STUDENT CONTACTS:** The inbound students often have made friendships that lead to host families. Particular care should be taken to qualify potential families, with emphasis on a clear understanding of the relationship between the family and the student.



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8. **OUTBOUND STUDENT ORIENTATION:** The host family program should be covered in some detail at the outbound student orientation nights. Follow through by offering to set up meetings with interested families to explain the program further. The observation is that families may decide that the outbound program is not for them at that time, but they may agree to host an inbound student later.
9. **OUTBOUND STUDENT FAMILIES:** Families of the students selected for the outbound program should be required to host a student if asked. Note: this does not mean that the family will qualify as a host family; they must be interviewed in advance of placing a student with them. A variation of this requirement is to have the family agree to recruit host families for interviews. This was the case for one Rotarian family that could not host but did find three qualified families.
10. **INFORMATIONAL EVENTS:** Host family information should be available at all events where the Youth Exchange Program is promoted. Examples are community celebrations, etc. (These events could be used to promote the exchange for potential outbound students as well as for host families.
11. **HIGH SCHOOL CONTACTS:** High school counsellors and foreign language teachers have been a source of recommendations for several clubs. The suggested procedure is to request names and ask assistance of the teacher making the recommendation to set up an appointment to present the program to potential families.
12. **ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE OF ROTARY:** Investigate for potential families:
 - Church. Talk to the priest / minister / rabbi and ask for their help in identifying potential families.
 - Fraternal Organizations: Elks, Moose, Lions have active community minded memberships. Ask to address their club and explain the program.



- Athletic Clubs: Baseball, basketball, etc are great sources of families.
- Good luck in your renewed efforts. Hope to get your input to add to the list of ideas.

Lloyd Morris

NOTE: District 5010, the Alaska District, has a great record of supporting the Youth Exchange Program. The 30 clubs in Alaska and 2 clubs in the Yukon all sponsor or host exchange students. District 5010 extends into Russia east of the Urals and has 6 clubs in Russia that have provided 10 Outbounds and hosted one Inbound annually since August 1995.



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Host Family Recruitment Requirements

There are several steps that must be completed with every host family. These steps include:

1. Each Host Family must be interviewed
2. Each Host Family must complete the Volunteer Information Form
3. Each adult in the household must undergo a Police Security Check
4. Each adult in the household must receive role training
5. The Inbound Counsellor must conduct a home visit
6. An evaluation form must be completed for each host family.

The interview template follows in this manual. Forms can be downloaded from www.yex5360.org



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Host Family Interview

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5360 Long Term Youth Exchange Program HOST FAMILIES AGENDA FOR HOME VISIT/INTERVIEW

The intent of this process is twofold. The first piece is about due diligence and the second piece is about actively including you as part of our Rotary team to support this student and make their year in Canada amazing.

Rotary International Long Term Exchange

(Watch YEX 5360 video at this time for a basic introduction)

- One of Rotary's prime objectives is to foster International Understanding, Goodwill and Peace amongst nations.
- Rotary provides the environment for all participants to learn a culture foreign to their own, through direct interaction. Host families learn from the student selected and prepared for the program by Rotary.
- The youth exchange student learns by immersing in family and normal social circles in the host community
- Youth exchange provides all direct participants the environment to meet people from other lands and learn about their culture, family life and social infrastructure.
- To assist the students in maturing into young adults with more confidence in themselves and a broader understanding of the world than they would likely otherwise develop.
- To develop leadership abilities.

Have you thought about some of the challenges and fears a student might have arriving in a new country and living with people that he/she doesn't know? What do you think those might be?



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Tell me how you can assist the student given the skills each of you brings to this host parent role?

Hosting a Student

Many family experiences with hosting students have been really wonderful. This next section is meant to help you think through including a student into your family life.

Have you had a chance for the whole family to sit down together and talk about potentially having a student in your home? Tell me about that conversation.

Are there any members of your family that are a little uncomfortable with having a student in their home? Tell me about that.

What do you and your family hope to share or offer to a student?

What do you hope a student will gain from their experience of living as a member of your family?

What do you hope to gain as a family from the experience of including the student in your family?

Host Family Responsibilities are very much in line with typical parenting responsibilities.

- Provide family care and attention to the student
- The student should attend school and be a responsible member of your family and our Rotary Club.
- Keep me up to date with the student's progress, successes, as well as any concerns or problems

Obviously there are challenges for host families as well. What kinds of challenges do you think you might encounter?

Have you given any thought to how you might deal with challenges should they arise?



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Are you familiar with what resources are available to you in terms of support?

Boundaries and Safety

Every family has its own expectations and rules. With our own children these tend to evolve over time. With bringing a mostly grown young person into your home, it's probably more helpful to figure some of these things out in advance.

Have you talked together about your needs and expectations of the student in terms of the following:

- Household chores
- Laundry
- Rising time, curfew, and bed time.
- Use of telephone, computers, audio visual equipment, etc.
- Transportation
- Are there any areas of your home where the student is not welcome
- Other

When the student moves into your house they are suppose to go through a list of questions with you. Many of these things are on the list. I would encourage you to talk further about this and decide what you want from the student in each of these areas.

Are you familiar with what students are told with regard to their financial responsibility? _____ Students are housed and fed by their host families at the families' expense. Students come with some spending money and they also receive a monthly allowance of \$_____/month from Rotary to cover their expenses which might include: bus fare, spending money, toiletries, clothes, etc.



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Have you thought about what it might mean having a teenager in your home?

We all have different values and rules that are important to us. Tell me what rules or expectations do you have of a teenager living in your house?

- Friends
- Homework
- Dress
- Dating
- Drinking
- Drug use
- Driving (note: rotary's four D's are the four "no's" of the program and should be supported by host parents)

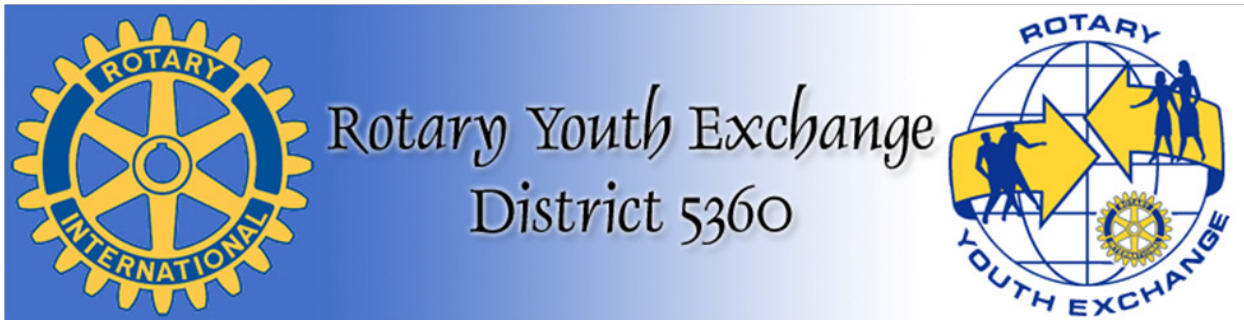
How comfortable are you about having this conversation with the student?

Would you like me to assist you in any way with this conversation? (The YEX5360 video has a student section which you can use to help review this with the student)

Rotary has expectations of the students as well. Students should be very clear about these expectations which include:

- Being an ambassador for their country, community, and sponsoring Rotary club
- Live within the rules of rules and expectations provided by Rotary
- Participate fully in school and school extracurricular activities
- Adapt to family, school, and culture
- Learn the language
- 4 D's No Drinking, No Driving, No Drugs, and No Dating

Student Safety



As a club and as parents we all want to protect the children in our care. (View video together) The best protection against abuse for any of us is to have a few people in our lives that we feel comfortable talking to. Ideally the student will develop this level of comfort with one or more host families and or their counsellor.

Do you have any concerns about this? What kinds of worries do you have about protecting a student while in your care?

Provide host family with emergency district emergency contact card

Review website (www.yex5360.org) and location of contact information

Paperwork and Details

Volunteer Information Form to be completed and returned

Police Security Checks to be completed and returned (*let family knows how these are kept and by whom*)

Travel Form – students are allowed to travel with the family and on school trips. District and I need to know when they are travelling and how we can contact them in the event of an emergency Rotary Counsellor and District need to be aware of where the student is going and when.

How can I and the YEX committee assist you? (Provide and review contact list) (Review website www.yex5360.org and locate host parent section – first night questions etc.)

Do you have any questions for me regarding the program, support, contact information, etc.?

Quick checklist for host families or Rotarians that have hosted previously and understand program:



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Complete volunteer Information Form Provide updated contact list for emergencies

Review club and district committee contacts



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District 5360



Resources

For additional resources and links, please refer to our
website:

www.yex5360.org