



HOST FAMILY MANUAL

One of the most important features of any CIF programme is Host Family Living.

Host Families provide a home base and home comforts so that the CIF participant can experience culture, social exchange, relaxation, friendship and fun!

This manual has been developed for National Branches to give to Host Families to provide a general guide when hosting someone participating in a CIF Exchange Programme.

It is acknowledged that each National Branch will have priorities and preferences that pertain to their own country. It is their responsibility to clarify such issues relating specifically to their own exchange programme and amend the manual accordingly.

IN ADVANCE OF PARTICIPANT'S ARRIVAL

- CIF participants receive specific information about their programme, accommodation and host families from the CIF Programme Co-ordinator. This includes some general information about issues such as local costs, the weather and recommended clothing and footwear.
- Host families are encouraged to contact the participant before they travel, to let him/ her know about their family and lifestyle and also to answer any queries the participant may have.

ACCOMMODATION

- Participants should have a bedroom to themselves and whenever possible, be given a house key so that they can come and go in their own time.
- On arrival Host families may have to explain how to use household appliances and equipment such as cookers and showers.

MEALS

- Host families are asked to provide breakfast and an evening meal, it is important to check whether the participant has any food allergies, restrictions or strong likes and dislikes.
- There may be some days when the participant or host family will make other arrangements. Most of the time, participants will be out of the house on placement during the day. They are then responsible for getting their own lunch. They may choose to take a packed lunch, in which case the host family can discuss how and where the participant can buy food and prepare this in advance as required.
- It is acceptable to ask the participant to assist with meal preparation and cleaning up. Some participants may wish to prepare special food from their country.
- Should you wish to invite the participant out for a meal, please make it clear whether they are expected to pay for their meal or not.

LAUNDRY

- Host Families should discuss and agree how participants' laundry will be done. It may be necessary to provide instructions, for example, about the use of equipment such as washing machines and when hot water is available

FAMILY LIFE

- Family life should continue as normal. Host Families should be sensitive and open to the differences in cultures. Particularly in the beginning, participants may need to practice their English language skills. Be sure to check that you both fully understand what is being said to each other to avoid misunderstanding. Note that English is not the main language in many CIF countries.
- Depending on the participant's level of English, it can sometimes be helpful to repeat arrangements in an alternative format. For example, I will meet you at 6.30 / I will meet you at half past six.
- Give participants "space" to be themselves and make space for yourself and your family too. Participants follow a very demanding schedule; are often speaking a different language and are in the process of adapting to the new cultural experiences.
- Host families are not expected to "entertain" or to make special arrangements for participants. However, it would be helpful if you could include your participant in any family or social occasions that may already be arranged, for example, outings to the swimming pool, local community meeting or school concert.
- Be open to a free exchange of ideas and discussion about respective cultures and customs in your different countries. It may be appreciated by the participants to be able to talk about their experiences of the day as you may help them put these in context.

ANIMALS

- Be aware that some participants may not be used to having house pets such as dogs and cats living as part of the family.

RELIGION

- Host Families should be aware that participants may or may not hold strong religious beliefs. Participants should be supported to continue their religious practices where possible. They may also enjoy the opportunity to be introduced to other religions therefore mutual agreement should be established.

TELEPHONE

- Most participants will have their own mobile phone but it would be helpful if they could use your house phone, in particular for town/country calls if necessary. Participants are expected to pay for international calls they make. A phone card or local sim card for their mobile phone may be a cheaper option.

INTERNET

- It is important to note that not all host families will have home computers and access to the internet may be limited or not available.
- Some participants may bring their own laptops/netbooks and have the ability to access the internet via a wireless connection. Host Families may provide opportunities for participants to use their home computers. A mutual agreement should then be reached about the times and duration when using the host family's computer.

SMOKING

- Host families and participants should reach agreement about smoking, for example, whether smoking is permitted within the house. Participants should be aware whether or not any host family members smoke within the house.

TRANSPORT

- Some guidance on local transport arrangements will be helpful for participants who wish to find their own way around.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

- An awareness and respect for other cultural behaviours and religious customs is essential in order to fully understand and respond appropriately to participants' needs. Communication with the participant by email before the programme is helpful. It is also important to encourage participants to express their views, discuss expectations and establish a mutually acceptable code of conduct.

CONTACT WITH NATIONAL BRANCH MEMBERS AND PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATORS

- Contact telephone numbers of programme co-ordinators and/or Branch committee should be made available to host families in case any issues arise during the programme.
- It can be helpful to share the programme timetable with host families as it is likely that programme arrangements will not be the same every day. For example, participants may not need to leave or return to the house at the same time as their hosts leave and return from their work.
- A list of host families where each participant is placed is helpful to promote communication and provide opportunities for host families to arrange transport when a participant moves to live with another host family.