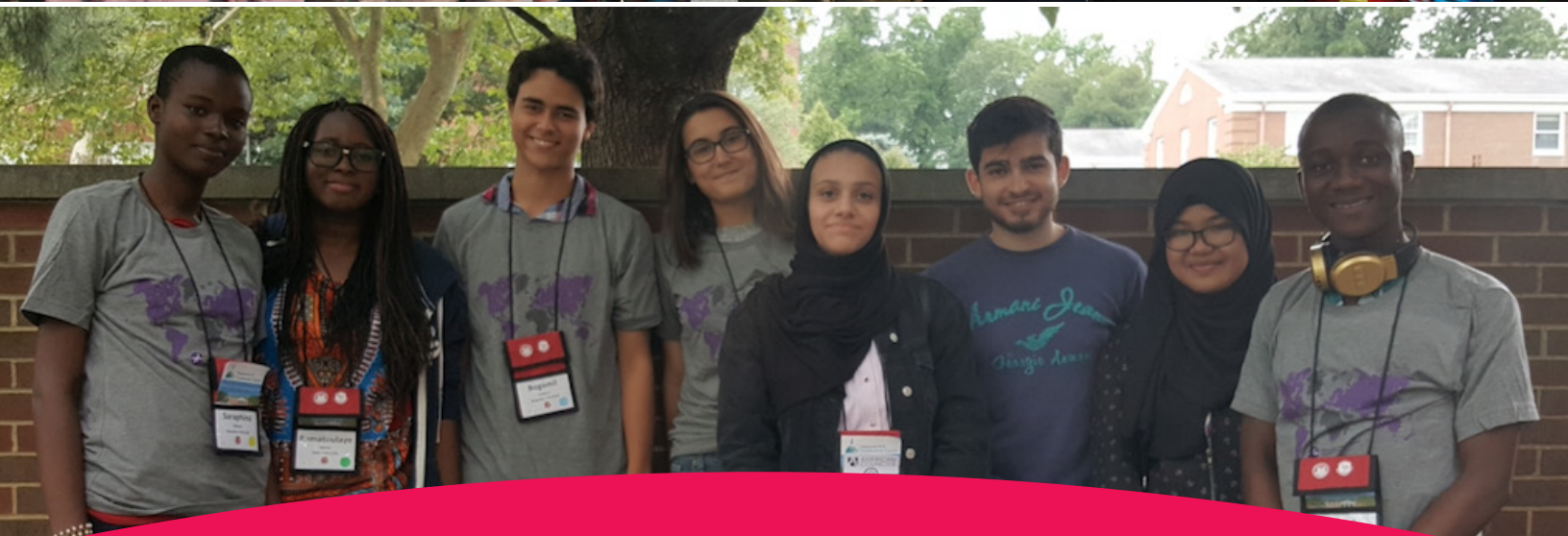




YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs



AREA REPRESENTATIVE
TRAINING MANUAL



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING USA
Intercultural Exchange Programs

**AREA
REPRESENTATIVE
TRAINING MANUAL**

Visit us at yfuusa.org

Mission Statement

Youth For Understanding (YFU) advances intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families, and communities.

Important Contact Information

YFU USA Travel Emergencies: **1.800.705.9510**

Travel Twitter: **@yfu_travel**

YFU After Hours Emergency Support: **1.800.424.3691**

U.S. Department of State Student Helpline: **1.866.283.9090**

YFU USA Regional Office: **1.866.4.YFU.USA** (1.866.493.8872)

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear YFU Area Representative,

From its founding, and at its core, Youth For Understanding has always been an organization powered by the passion and dedication of its volunteers. The volunteer spirit—one of service, empathy, inclusivity, and openness—embodies all that we hope to instill in the thousands of young people who choose a YFU exchange program each year.

Central to YFU’s volunteer framework is the role of the Area Representative. Area Representatives are vital links between students and families, providing a network of support throughout the program year. Area Representatives are unbiased advocates and cultural liaisons, helping students and families navigate adjustments while making the most of their exchange experience.

At the same time, the exchange experience is yours to share! Through your service as an Area Representative, YFU offers you a chance to meet and engage with like-minded people who share your interest in a broader world. It’s an opportunity to learn new customs, to share ideas, to disband untruths, and to promote peace and understanding--right in your own community.

On behalf of our students, host families, volunteers, and staff, thank you for joining us as a YFU Area Representative, and welcome to Team YFU!

Sincerely,



Scott J. Messing

President & Chief Executive Officer



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I. INTRODUCTION TO BEING AN AREA REPRESENTATIVE

Volunteers enable YFU to host more than 1,200 international students and send nearly 400 American students abroad each year. The YFU mission is to advance intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families, and communities. As the heart of YFU, volunteers carry out the work with students and families to achieve this mission.

Area Representatives are sometimes called Area Reps, or ARs. All three names can be used interchangeably. Area Representatives are the YFU representatives in communities across the US. While YFU staff, such as Field Directors, are initially in contact with students and families; ARs are often the local YFU representative who regularly interacts with the student and family throughout the exchange.

Being an Area Representative is a meaningful way to contribute to the YFU mission by interacting directly with international students and American families. The AR serves as an unbiased advocate, offering guidance and support to the student, family and school by building a relationship and having regular contact with each participant (student, family, and school personnel). YFU approaches student support with the expectation that all students can have a successful exchange experience, and that “success” is defined in many different ways. YFU aims to create a supportive environment for students that allows them to learn and grow, especially from challenges. When working with students, keep the following five guiding principles in mind:

- Students grow through positive and negative experiences
- YFU support is a dynamic process that includes many stakeholders
- Always consider the circumstances of each individual; strategies that apply to one situation may not apply to another
- Each student should remain on program, if possible
- The goal of YFU USA is to support students, host families, and the YFU community.

These guiding principles will be discussed in detail in Section Three and this manual begins with a focus on the key roles and responsibilities of being an AR. Throughout the manual, there are also tips and best practices that many Area Reps use when carrying out responsibilities. There are several appendices at the end of the manual, including an acronyms list, the Volunteer Code of Conduct, and additional AR tools.

Becoming an Area Rep

1. *Learn about the AR role*
2. *Take the two online courses*
3. *FD matches the AR with a student and host family and provides contact information*

After completing the volunteer application and talking with staff from either Volunteer Programs, or the local Field Director about the possibility of being an Area Representative, a volunteer is required to take the two self-paced, online AR training courses. After completing the training, the local Field Director will contact the volunteer about a particular student and host family who need an Area Representative. Once the volunteer agrees to work with the student and family, the FD officially assigns the Area Representative. This step includes providing the AR with their contact information, access to some student and family records and reporting requirement tools.



II. AREA REPRESENTATIVE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

This section, *Area Representative Roles and Responsibilities*, explores all of the key tasks for an AR. Within each role, there are associated responsibilities. Take special note of the text boxes highlighting the key responsibilities for each role. These responsibilities are the action items for the AR and will serve as a guide for specific activities an AR should do with students, families, YFU, and other stakeholders.

The YFU Area Representative serves three important roles:

Role 1 - to be the YFU contact person for the family, student, and school;

Role 2 - to be a mentor to the student and host family; this role includes being an unbiased advocate for the student, and helping to solve problems; and

Role 3 - to be a representative of YFU within the local community.

ROLE ONE: YFU CONTACT PERSON

With students and families across the country, YFU volunteers are key stakeholders in the YFU family and provide critical on-the-ground support to carry out YFU programs. **Area Representatives are the local YFU contact for students and families.** In addition to being the familiar face of YFU and answering student and family questions, the US Department of State requires that each student and family have a reliable contact person who can provide consistent support and guidance.

There are five key responsibilities of being the **YFU Contact Person**:

Responsibility 1: Have regular, ongoing contact with the student and family (including, but not limited to contacting the student and family at least once a month);

Responsibility 2: meet with both the host family and student face-to-face at least twice during the exchange experience;

Responsibility 3: complete the Monthly Contact Report (MCR);

Responsibility 4: contact the school three times a year or according to school preferences; and

Responsibility 5: report to YFU any issues of concern or celebration that may occur

First Responsibility: Regular, Ongoing Contact

- *“Go-to” person for the student and family on questions and concerns*
- *Separate monthly contact with both the student & the family*
- *Contact students often and build trusting relationships*

The first responsibility associated with the role of contact

person is to have **regular, ongoing contact with the student and family including, but not limited to contacting the student and family at least once a month.** The AR is the “go-to person” for the student and family regarding any questions or concerns about the exchange. Regular, ongoing contact with the student and family will provide support and encouragement. YFU recommends in-person contact whenever possible. This can occur as scheduled, planned meetings, and it can occur

during social events, at the local orientations, or when attending school events to support the student. Contact can also occur through phone calls or email.

To facilitate ongoing contact and communication so that families and students feel supported, YFU requires that the AR contact both the student and the family separately and independent of one another at least once a month. It is important that there is privacy for each conversation with the student and family. This allows each party to share sensitive information with the AR.

The student and family are aware of this requirement and should accommodate AR attempts for contact. If the student and/or family are not responding to AR requests for contact, or the AR is unable to make contact due to student and family availability, contact the assigned Field Director and/or Support Services Manager (SSM). Contact needs to work both ways, so it is recommended that the AR encourages the host family and student to reciprocate communication and reach out with questions. ARs also appreciate hearing from the student and family when there are accomplishments and good news to report.

Second Responsibility: Meet with the student and family

- *First contact: within two weeks of the student's arrival*
- *Second face-to-face contact: beginning of the second semester*

The second responsibility is closely related to the first: **the AR must meet with the student and family face-to-face at least twice.** Per the Department of State, the first face-to-face contact with the student must be within the first month of the student's arrival; however **YFU asks Area Reps to have in-person contact with students within two weeks of the student's arrival in the US.** A second in-person meeting must occur at the beginning of the second semester. As the AR gets to know the family and student, and builds a relationship with them, contact can occur more than monthly, and YFU encourages this. Aside from the two required in-person contacts, monthly contact can occur via phone or email, however most ARs, students, and families prefer face-to-face contact. Texting, and connecting with the student on social media are also great ways to keep in touch, but **these communications do not qualify as meeting the monthly contact requirement.**

To fulfill the responsibilities as the Contact Person, building a trusting relationship with the student and family is a critical first step. A good way to start to build this relationship is to establish a connection with the student and family as soon as possible. On page 6, review some best practices and tips for building a trusting relationship with the student and family.

The third responsibility of being the YFU contact person is to **complete the monthly contact reports.** The

Third Responsibility: MCR

- *Deadline: 25th of each month*
- *Accessible: on-line*
- *Take the self-paced LMS course*

monthly contact report (also known as the MCR) is the documentation tool that shows that YFU is meeting the US Department of State requirements for the J-1 International Visitors Program. The report provides details about the monthly interactions between the AR, the student, and the family. The report covers the requirement for monthly contact with both the student and the family. In addition, the report facilitates additional communication with YFU, alerting YFU to any challenges or situations that require YFU interventions. The report has questions related to the date and method of the monthly contact (in-person, or phone). In addition, it asks the AR to verify the contact information for the student and family. Several questions require narrative responses. These questions explore how the student and family are adjusting, how the student is doing in school and with social interactions, and there are opportunities to describe any challenges or difficulties that the student and family are facing. Later in this manual, there are tips on how to assess the student and family's adjustment to complete the narrative questions. ARs are responsible for completing this report on time, by the 25th of each month. Meeting this deadline is an important compliance requirement for YFU. Later in this manual, there will be detailed discussion on how to access, complete, and submit the MCR. In addition, take the self-paced course on the volunteer account to learn more about the MCR.

YFU and The US Department of State

Completing the MCR on time keeps YFU in good standing with the US Department of State. Failure to document monthly contact with the student and family can result in negative consequences for YFU, such as a decrease in the number of international students that YFU is permitted to accept.

A great resource to help ARs carry out their monthly contact is the **Monthly Support Tips** provided on the Volunteer Lounge. These timely tips provide the AR with resources to have meaningful conversations with students during their monthly contact and the tips can be helpful for ARs to complete their MCR.

Monthly Support Tips

- *Topics to discuss with students & families*
- *Establish meaningful relationships with families and students.*
- *Monthly Support Tips: yfuusa.org/support-tips*

Best Practices & Tips for Building Trusting Relationships

- As soon as the student is placed with the host family, the AR can write a welcome letter or email to the student to introduce themselves as the AR. Describe how the AR is a support person and that contact will occur at least once a month to check-in on how things are going. This can be very comforting and reassuring to the student and the natural family to know that someone else is excited to support the student during this experience.
- Call the Host family and make introductions. Explain the role as the AR and the responsibility of monthly contact. Find out how the family would like this contact to occur and their expectations of how and when visits should be scheduled.
- Ask the host family if they would like the AR to join them at the airport when the student arrives in the US.
- Talk with the family about planning a small welcome meal with the student.
- Call the student within a day or two of the student's arrival to confirm the student has accurate information including the AR's full name, phone number, cell phone number, email address and home address. YFU provides this on the student's YFU ID card. Introduce yourself by name and use your title – Area Representative. Students meet many people on arrival and sometimes get confused about roles. The AR should tell the student that they are there to support them and they can call if they are nervous, scared, or have a question.
- The AR should keep an “open-ear” policy and let the student and family know that the AR is there for them and ready to listen. Discuss preferences for best mode of communication and time of day for phone calls.
- Follow through on commitments to the student and family.
- Be warm and encouraging to the student. When talking to students on the phone, ensure that the student is in a place where he/she can speak freely to share any concerns. Keep in mind that there should be opportunities to have conversations in private with the student. This allows the student to feel comfortable sharing challenges with the AR.
- When connecting with the student, include the host family on these plans so that everyone knows what is happening and when the meeting will occur. Be aware that all families are different. Some families are very welcoming and want frequent visits with the AR; while other families may prefer a little more privacy. Texting or messaging the student and family can be a great way to make these arrangements.
- Whatever the occasion or setting, be sure to identify the contact as the official monthly check-in so that student is aware that this is happening consistently.
- Attend the local orientations to continue building a relationship with the student and family.



Fourth Responsibility: School Contact and Relationship Building

- *Talk with the FD about school contact and the approach.*
- *Contact the school three times during the school year.*
- *Complete the school contact report*
- *Document if the school is not responding to requests for communication.*

The fourth responsibility of being the contact person is **contacting the school three times during the year-long exchange experience** to check on the student's school experience and to build a relationship with the school. Always start by discussing with your FD how to design the strategy for school contact, especially if there are many YFU students attending the school and/or the school has specific preferences for contact from YFU. In some cases, FDs have particular methods of working with the schools and school contact will be a shared task. In other cases, the FD will ask the AR to take on the responsibility independently. This is especially important if the FD does not live in the same city (or state) as the school.

Schools are one of YFU's most valuable resources because:

- Schools are the most important public group associated with YFU and, building relationships with schools increases community awareness about YFU's mission and the importance of intercultural education.
- School personnel, especially language teachers and social studies teachers are often YFU champions; maintaining and growing these relationships spreads the YFU mission to students and families.

As mentioned above, YFU expects the AR to attempt to contact the students' school three times during an academic year-long exchange. This may occur in person, by phone, or email. Often school personnel direct the AR to the student's guidance counselor. Many ARs contact the school just after report cards have been issued. ARs may make their first school contact within a few weeks of the student's arrival to assist the student and host family in choosing the student's classes and to check that the classes are appropriate. When contacting the school, the AR's first goal is find out how the student is adjusting to the school. The school contact report contains specific questions regarding the student's adjustment to the school and following of school rules. After talking with a school official about the student's progress (or any concerns), the AR completes the school report on the MCR system.

In some cases, schools are particular about contact, and in rare cases, schools reject a volunteer's attempt at contact.

Follow the school policies and if contact is attempted but not successful due the school's preferences, note that in the school report. Even if the school does not respond to AR requests for communication, complete the report by noting the attempted contact with the date, method, and the name of the school personnel.

Fifth Responsibility: Report Problems or Issues to YFU

- *Report any legal, health, or safety-related problems to YFU immediately*
- *Use email or a phone call to alert the SSM to other concerns*
- *Use the monthly contact report as a tool to document and describe situations*
- *After-hour emergencies: **1.800.424.3691***

Report problems or issues to YFU is the fifth responsibility of being the local YFU contact person. YFU relies on the Area Representative to notify YFU staff about any issues that need support. **YFU requires that ARs contact YFU staff if the AR learns about any legal, health, or safety issues.**

YFU asks Area Representatives to contact their Support Services Manager via phone or email with any concerns. Area Representatives are encouraged to also contact their Field Director to keep them informed. **It is vital the Area Representatives report legal, medical, or safety issues immediately by either contacting their Support Services Manager or by calling the 24-hour emergency line.**

Cases that require immediate contact to YFU Staff:

- *Any alleged or actual violation of a sexual nature*
- *Death of a family member or friend*
- *Police involvement with a student, host parent, or a person in the student's life*
- *Any other situation or incident involving student, host family, or other person close to the student that may become a negative news story*
- **Call your SSM immediately or call the emergency line: 1.800.424.3691 for after-hours emergencies.**

As the AR builds a trusting relationship with the student and family, be aware that the student and/or family may ask the AR for assistance or guidance. Often, the AR can share appropriate answers or locate YFU resources that provide guidance (i.e. Monthly Support Tips in the Volunteer Lounge, policies in the Host Family Handbook). However, in the event the AR is uncertain how to respond, or the AR recognizes that the student or family needs help to solve a problem, the AR contacts the assigned SSM. The SSM must

be kept informed about ongoing issues, issues requiring mediation, host family replacement, or policy violations.

The SSM is a trained counselor who provides support, training, and guidance to volunteers, students, host families, and school personnel. SSMs ask that ARs reach out when there are challenges, as well as provide a “heads up” if behavior patterns are causing the AR any concern. YFU has found that the sooner an SSM and AR work together with students and host families, small issues are less likely to turn into significant problems.

HIPPA Laws

ARs should note that YFU USA does not provide direct medical care to students, and therefore not subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) laws. However, when sharing a student’s medical information, it is important to follow best practices to ensure confidentiality as much as possible. Student medical information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis among YFU staff and volunteers.

Should issues arise, the AR is responsible for contacting the SSM by a phone call or email. SSMs rely on ARs to reach out directly to them for assistance and guidance on problem solving. An SSM is available during working hours and an emergency SSM is on-call for after-hour emergencies. See the side bar on page 7 for a description when an AR must reach out to the SSM.

The SSM will ask key questions about what has happened. A best practice is for the AR to clearly document the situation by informing the SSM of behaviors, conversations, potential challenges, and the outcomes of challenges when talking with students and families. This can also be reported in the MCR which provides an open question for reporting issues or problems; however directly reaching out to the SSM provides more immediate response and is necessary during escalating situations.

Detailed documentation is essential for YFU staff to support the case and to work effectively with international partners. The SSM will communicate information about the case to the overseas National Office. ARs must keep a sequential list of events and communications to share with the SSM in order to facilitate proper resolution of the issue. Also, ARs must maintain notes based on facts, kept in order of occurrence and dated, and containing actual quotes from the host family or student. ARs must avoid documentation based on their own emotions, interpretation and speculation. Examples of appropriate and useful documentation may include: a statement of the situation; Precipitating incidents; Placement history; Volunteer actions to provide support; Student’s state of mind; discussions of the case with the student and the host family; a plan of action or agreement made between with the student and the host family.

Thorough and objective documentation of the problems written by the Area Representative is a critical component of the support process. Section four provides more information about documentation, the support process, and working with SSMs.

ROLE TWO: MENTOR TO THE STUDENT AND HOST FAMILY

The AR has three specific roles, the first section provided details about the first role: YFU Contact Person. The **second role for the Area Representative is to be a mentor to the student and host family and help with problem-solving by being an unbiased advocate.** There are five key responsibilities associated with this role.

Responsibility 1. Be available to the student and family to answer questions or address concerns.

Responsibility 2. Offer support in cross-cultural adjustment and parenting a teenager.

Responsibility 3. Prevent problems by encouraging and facilitating open, honest communication. Remind everyone of the agreements they made as they applied to be an exchange student or be a host family to an exchange student.

Responsibility 4. Listen to both sides of the story and be neutral when problem solving.

Responsibility 5. Be an advocate. Speak up for the student and /or the family and ensure everyone's best interests are a top priority in decision-making.

First Responsibility: Be available

- *Share contact info with family and student*
- *Connect via social media*
- *Respond as soon as possible*
- *Show enthusiasm when talking with student and family*
- *Share scheduling limitations*
- *If unavailable for more than two weeks, contact the FD*

The first responsibility as the mentor for the family and student is **to be available to them.** This may be a new experience for the host family and this is a new experience for the student. There may be many questions as everyone adjusts to one another. Being available to show support and help is important. Confirm the family and the student have accurate AR contact information (home phone and cellphone numbers, email address, and mailing address) so they can reach out when they need additional guidance. ARs may consider sharing social media connections- Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc. so that maintaining contact is easy.

Being available means that the AR is excited to talk with the student and family and genuinely cares about their well-being in routine and/or challenging times. Being available also includes returning phone calls in a timely manner. Double-check that the student understands who his/her AR is. Students meet many new people and may be too shy or confused to ask. Friendly greetings and chats between the AR and host family can sometimes prompt student to think they have a close friendship. A good practice is to check for comprehension. Ask your student: *“Tell me who is the YFU AR for you and your family? What is this person’s role?”*

Think about personal boundaries. Decide on the appropriate times of day and ways the student, family, and AR can make contact (text, call, stop by the house, etc.) and communicate these expectations clearly. In addition, if a personal event, such as a vacation prevents an AR from accepting phone calls, inform the family and student. When the AR is not available for more than two weeks, the AR must inform the Field Director so back-up plans can be arranged.

Second Responsibility: Offer cross-cultural adjustment and teen parenting support

- *Be prepared to talk and be supportive of the student and family as they adjust to one another*
- *Access background reading about cultural adjustment and homesickness using this link: yfuusa.org/post-arrival-orientation*
- *For information about teen parenting, access the Host Family Handbook on pages 17-24*

The next key responsibility of being a mentor is **to offer support, especially regarding to cross-cultural adjustment(s) for the student and parenting of a teen for the host family.** The AR should be familiar with some common cross-cultural themes such as the stages of cultural adjustment. YFU provides background readings in the orientation pages on my.yfu.org as well as the Monthly Support Tips to address common issues a host family or student may go through. Sometimes both parties need reminders that they are going through a challenging adjustment period and as a mentor, the AR can work with the student and family.

Additionally, parenting a teen can have its own challenges, especially if the host family doesn't have children, or has never parented a teenager. YFU has many resources and materials (located in the Volunteer Lounge on my.yfu.org) to help the AR talk with host families about parenting a teen. Use the Host Family Handbook as a reference, review the AR Monthly Support Tips, and the Volunteer Lounge to read about cultural adjustment and other relevant topics.

Lastly, YFU asks that ARs help at local orientations, such as the Post Arrival (typically in September), the Mid-Year (January), and the Re-Entry (April/May). Orientations provide all stakeholders (ARs, students, and families) with key information for cross-cultural learning. By attending and volunteering at YFU orientations, ARs become more equipped to work with families and students. Ask the local FD about the orientation schedule for the area.

Third Responsibility: Encourage open, honest communication

- *Ask clarifying questions, to avoid misunderstandings*
- *The student and host family openly discuss household routines and expectations*
- *Open communication promotes personal growth and conflict resolution skills*

A third responsibility as a mentor is **to prevent problems by encouraging open, honest communication between the family and student**. YFU has found that if students and families can be honest with another about expectations and boundaries, and if the family can communicate early to the student about the rules and household routines, then student and families can solve problems together. It is advised that ARs remind student and host families to ask clarifying questions, especially at the beginning of the experience, to avoid misunderstandings. Confirming a full understanding of what is being said, and addressing questions and concerns head-on will prevent issues from festering. Often, arguments are related to small issues that could have been solved had the family or student spoken up sooner.

One key strategy to prevent problems is for the family and the student to meet together, and use the handout, [How Do We Do Things in Our Home?](#) to talk in detail about habits and behaviors that are part of the home culture. When checking in on families and students, ask both if they have had conversations about expectations. These early conversations can prevent miscommunications down the line. The AR can remind all parties about what they agreed to do when they joined the program and how can they work together to uphold their sides of the agreement. The Host Family Agreement includes all the details of hosting; review this with the family to address many questions.

YFU also sees open communication as an opportunity for personal growth and development. Students (and families) become resilient and develop skills in conflict resolution as they improve communication skills and learn to deal with challenges in a mature and empathetic way. By encouraging open communication, the AR is laying the groundwork for families and students to solve problems independently.

Fourth Responsibility: Listen to BOTH sides of the story

- *Be unbiased and neutral*
- *Show empathy for both the student and the family*
- *Give each person an opportunity to be heard and ask open-ended questions*
- *Avoid simplifying the problem or making generalizations*
- *Contact the SSM if advice or assistance is needed*
- *Document details in the monthly contact report*

The fourth responsibility is that **the AR has a responsibility to listen to BOTH sides of the story and not be biased toward the family or student**. The AR should encourage the family and student to share their perspectives on a problem. In intercultural situations there are often vast differences in the two accounts of what happened that led to a problem. It is important to be neutral and give each person the opportunity to share their perspective. Even if the AR doesn't agree with student's or family's behavior or decisions, the AR needs to be a good listener and exercise empathy for all sides.

In order to best understand the problem, ask open-ended questions and ask for examples. When listening to the problems, encourage each side to articulate its view of what happened. Avoid simplifying the problem, or making generalizations. If a student or family comes to the AR with a situation and the AR is not sure what guidance to provide, contact the YFU Support Services Manager. The SSM will work with the AR to help resolve the problem.

Remember that if a situation is not sufficiently documented, it can be difficult for YFU to propose all the different solutions to a problem, especially if the solutions involve international YFU partners. In the event of a true emergency, a YFU staff person is on-call 24 hours a day, every day.

The final responsibility as a mentor is to **advocate for the**

Fifth Responsibility: Be an advocate

- *Listen to what the student/host family is saying and intercede on their behalf*
- *Cultural differences can create situations that may need AR advocacy*
- *Keeping the student's best interest in mind might not result in what the student wants*

student and family as necessary. YFU counts on the AR to speak up on behalf of the student and/or family to the SSM, FD, or others, such as educators, coaches, teachers, etc. when necessary. When working with families, school personnel, YFU, and others, the student's best interests should be the AR's priority. Situations which require the AR to advocate for the student can occur when a host family does not realize that they are being offensive to the student. For example, asking repeatedly or pressuring the student to go to religious services that the student does not want to attend is a reason to advocate for the student. In this case, the AR should talk with the family on the student's behalf and explain that their behavior is disrespectful to the student's personal beliefs. The AR also supports the family, and in some situations, advocating for the family is appropriate. This might involve the AR talking with the student, school personnel, or YFU staff about the family's needs.

In some cases, advocating for the student and **keeping the student's best interests in mind might not always be what the student wants.** For example, if the AR is brought into discussions with the SSM about a whether to send the student back to the home country early. The AR will have important input as the AR knows the student well. Keep in mind, it is **not the AR who makes this decision.** This is a case where what is best for the student might not be what the students wants. In worse case scenarios, the student is not aware that a behavior or interaction is inappropriate. **If the AR learns about inappropriate or dangerous behavior, the AR must take action to protect the student.**



ROLE THREE: BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF YFU

As a Representative of YFU, there are three key responsibilities:

Responsibility 1. Support the YFU mission

Responsibility 2. Direct students and families on how to follow all policies and procedures and help the family find important YFU information

Responsibility 3. Ask for YFU help as needed

First Responsibility: Support the YFU Mission

- *The Area Rep is the local face of YFU*
- *The YFU Volunteer Agreement is an important resource for all volunteers; this includes the YFU Code of Conduct*
- *Building trust in the community with the host family, student, schools and other YFU volunteers is supporting YFU's mission*

Supporting the YFU mission is a primary responsibility of an Area Rep. YFU's mission statement is **to advance intercultural understanding, mutual respect and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families and communities.** The AR is the face of YFU in the local community. As the local YFU representative, the actions of the AR will influence peoples' impressions of YFU.

YFU puts a significant amount of trust in volunteers to represent YFU. Review the mission and exemplify it! Review the volunteer agreement, including the YFU Code of Conduct (see appendix VII). The confidentiality clause is especially important for Area Representatives.

An Area Rep will build trust and must keep private information confidential, as much as possible. However there are limitations. Due to the realities of working with students and families, confidential information sometimes must be shared to resolve problems and in extreme cases, keep people safe. All YFU staff and volunteers should refrain from promises of confidentiality; however, all YFU participants have the right to expect that YFU USA will only share confidential information when necessary. Reach out to an SSM with any questions about when confidentially should be broken.

A second responsibility associated with the role of being a YFU representative is to **direct students and families to follow all policies, and provide guidance as needed.** Students and families often ask Area Reps about the Travel Policy and the Dangerous Activities Policy. Review these policies and be prepared to provide instructions to students and families concerning the permission forms and specific procedures related to these policies. Both policies and directions to implement are available to the host family in the Host Family online Account page under the Resources

tab, and in the Host Family Handbook, mailed to the host family.

Second Responsibility: Direct families to follow policies and help host family find resources

- *Follow-up with families and students about policies and procedures (especially travel and dangerous activities policy)*
- *The Host Family Handbook provides many answers to questions host families ask*
- *Make sure students and families are going to orientations throughout the year*

A key policy, also described in the host family agreement addresses orientations. The Host Family Pre-Arrival Orientation is for host families only and usually occurs before the students arrive. This orientation is mandatory for the host family. It typically occurs in the summer. All Host Families must either attend this orientation or access the orientation online. Host Families (and ARs) are encouraged to come with their students to the three orientations that take place throughout the exchange year. These are mandatory for students and highly recommended for families.

Third Responsibility: Ask for YFU help

- *the SSM*
- *the Field Director*
- *Volunteer Programs: volunteers@yfu.org*
- *the National Volunteer Advisory Council*

The third and final responsibility of being a YFU representative is to **ask for help from YFU staff** when necessary. There are many resources available to help an Area Representative. If the AR has challenges working with students or families or has questions about their duties as an Area Rep, they can connect with any of these resource people. YFU urges ARs to contact SSMs first about student and family challenges.

- the assigned SSM
- the local Field Director
- Volunteer Programs staff
- members of the National Volunteer Advisory Council

The National Volunteer Advisory Council (NVAC) is a nine-member, all-volunteer elected group with many years of YFU experience. This group of dedicated volunteers invites all volunteers nationwide to contact them with ideas, suggestions and questions or concerns, as they are a great advocate group for all volunteers. Check out information about the NVAC: yfuusa.org/about/leadership.



III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES & TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Section two described the Area Rep roles and responsibilities. This section will explain the YFU approach to working with students and families (YFU Guiding Principles). ARs can apply these ideas and techniques when working directly with students and families. There is also information about the YFU Support Structure and the YFU staff who are available to assist students, families, and volunteers. The second section of this chapter will share effective strategies to build rapport with students and families. Finally, the last part of this section will introduce the five steps of problem solving and other YFU strategies for dealing with difficult situations.

YFU GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SUPPORT

YFU approaches student support with the expectation that all students can have a successful exchange experience, and that “success” is defined in many different ways. YFU also knows that being an exchange student is challenging. YFU aims to create a supportive environment for students that allows them to learn and grow, especially from challenges. To that end, when working with students keep the following five guiding principles in mind:

1. Students grow through positive and negative experiences
2. YFU support is a dynamic process that includes many stakeholders
3. Always consider the circumstances of each individual; strategies that apply to one situation may not apply to another
4. Each student should remain on program, if possible
5. The goal of YFU USA is to support students, host families, and the YFU community.

Guiding Principle 1- Students grow through positive and negative experiences. Short-comings and mistakes are a natural part of the exchange experience. Fear of making a mistake or of looking silly can prevent students from challenging themselves. Area Reps should encourage

students to try new things and step out of their comfort zone. This is the best way for students to learn and adapt to American culture.

Encourage the students to associate challenges and discomfort with opportunities to grow and to discover more about themselves and the people around them. Misunderstandings between the student and any member of the host family are relatively common, especially in the beginning of the exchange experience. Often, these misunderstandings are due to a communication gap with the family, and/or English language difficulties. If approached with a positive mindset, misunderstandings within the family, at school, or with new American friends can be a time of growth for everyone as they learn to problem solve. Help students and families think about challenges from this perspective.

Guiding Principle 2- YFU support is a dynamic process that includes many stakeholders. The student, the host family, the hosting community, Area Representatives, YFU USA, the YFU organization in the sending country, and the natural family of the student are all stakeholders with a vested interest in the YFU exchange. And, each of these stakeholders brings different perspectives and motivations to the exchange. Working with so many stakeholders is complex. For ARs, it is important to be familiar with YFU’s strategy for support and communication with stakeholders.

When issues arise within the exchange experience, YFU has steps in place to best resolve a situation. YFU wants families and students to try to work through issues within the home whenever possible. However, the AR is also there to provide support to both the student and the family. When the AR gets involved (or if the AR questions getting involved) with a situation, the AR should contact the SSM. This does two things: one- early communication to the SSM triggers the support process before challenges become insurmountable; and two- documenting in a timely manner the behaviors, discussions, challenges etc. that cause concern assists SSMs in taking action with YFU partners.

YFU SSMs provide guidance and can advise an AR on how to help students and families. When challenges need to be communicated to the partner country office and then to

the natural parents, the SSM will step in and take on a more direct role in providing services to the student and family. This is especially true in more serious circumstances.

If the student chooses to contact his/her natural parents when there are challenges, rather than using the YFU support that is locally available (the host family and the AR), resolving the issue can be more difficult. Natural parents are far away from their child. It can be very alarming and not very helpful if the student immediately calls his/her natural parents, rather than reaching out to the AR or the SSM for assistance. Review the Lines Of Communication graphic found on page 36 that illustrates how communication should flow among these different stakeholders. In addition, Host families should also follow the lines of communication and engage the AR, rather than reach out directly to the student's natural parents when problem solving. ARs can encourage host families to be mindful regarding how often they contact the natural parents as this can undermine the host family's authority with the student.

Guiding Principle 3- Consider the circumstances of each individual; strategies that apply to one situation, may not apply to another.

Every student and every family member are individuals and bring their own unique personalities and experience to the exchange. In addition, students are learning about and living in a new culture, with unfamiliar social norms. In some cases, the new culture and the rules of society can be in opposition to a student's own values and traditions. With so many dynamic factors in play, it is important to look at each circumstance independently and not make assumptions about behaviors, values, or beliefs.

YFU does not recommend a "one size fits all" approach to supporting students and families. Each challenge will have its own solution that fits best for the student and family. ARs should explore different solutions that will fit the unique needs of families and students and be flexible with mature and reasoned judgment. Be cautious of using language such as: *always* and *never*. In most cases, there is wiggle room for compromise and finding solutions that work for the individuals; and these solutions should not be applied to all.

Guiding Principle 4: Each student should remain on program. It is the intent of YFU that each student who comes on program is carefully selected and oriented before arriving in the US and should **be able to remain on program for its duration**. A positive attitude and desire to help solve problems so a student can remain on program are key attributes for the AR.

ARs use a collection of strategies to help students stay on program: obtaining advice from the SSM; creating behavior agreements; developing a list of possible solutions to an issue with students and families together; and regularly checking in with the student and host family (and many others). Most importantly, be committed to the idea that

all students can have a positive, meaningful experience, and they can learn from mistakes and challenges (and stay on program). However, despite all efforts, some students will return home early as that solution may be the best way to help that specific student. This decision is made at the National Office by the Support Team and with the endorsement of the YFU CEO & President. ARs should never threaten an "early return" and suggesting this to students is "out of bounds."

Guiding Principle 5: The goal of YFU USA is to support students, host families, and the YFU community. The AR and their support to students and families (as well as schools and community members) helps solve problems before they become insurmountable and could result in the student's early return to his or her home country. YFU USA wants to support students in a timely fashion because the sooner a student or family gets assistance from the AR and YFU, the more likely it is that the problem can be resolved.



**ACTIVE LISTENING, ASKING QUESTIONS
& PROBLEM SOLVING**

The five guiding principles provide a framework for the AR's approach to supporting students and families. Active listening, asking meaningful questions, and using problem-solving skills are essential to fostering strong relationships with students and host families.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening requires concentration and frequent acknowledgement of what is being said. **Often, people talk at each other rather than taking time to truly hear what the other person has to say.** Empathizing and trying to understand someone else's view, even if the view is one that is not shared by the listener is what active listening is all about.

Eye Contact

*Interestingly, psychologists have reported that some teenagers are often most comfortable opening up when they **don't** look somebody in the eye. Taking a student for a drive, or going on a walk, and asking questions may help students feel less interrogated and more like they are simply engaged in a conversation.*

Active listening helps students open up. It is a key to building a relationship and being an effective AR. An AR needs to understand different perspectives when gathering information in regards to student/family challenges. Active listening helps an AR learn early about potential problems (or misunderstandings) to prevent them from escalating. There are five key strategies that can be used to improve active listening skills.

1. Pay attention to the speaker and stay focused.

- Give the speaker undivided attention.
- Keep natural eye contact.
- Keep body posture open and inviting. The listener should relax their body, lean slightly forward, toward the speaker and keep their arms uncrossed. This will help the other person relax and open up.
- The listener's thoughts should be focused on the conversation. Try to be present with everything the other person is saying, even visualizing what they are sharing.
- Don't mentally prepare for what to say next. First, hear the person all the way through and then come up with any follow-up question. This way, the listener won't miss any details.
- After the speaker finishes, it is fine to take a moment to formulate any questions or ideas, rather than thinking about how to respond while they are speaking. By pausing and reflecting on what was said in order to formulate the question or idea, the speaker will appreciate that the listener truly wants to ask a meaningful question and understand their ideas.
- Avoid being distracted by any environmental factors. Don't have important conversations with a TV on, or in loud places (such as walking around a shopping center) that will have environmental distractions.
- It is important to ensure that the space being used allows for a private and honest conversation. Asking a host family to leave to speak privately with the student or taking the student for a walk are ways to do this.
- Also, put away all electronic devices and ask the student to do the same. No one should be checking a phone while having an important conversation.

2. Acknowledge the speaker by nodding or gesturing. Make sure the student or the host family knows that the AR is listening to them.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use facial expressions.
- Use verbal signals like "yes...umhum."

- Verbal cue, "Hmmm?" with the inflection going up at the end indicates a question. This is a great way to indicate that the listener needs more details.
- To confirm a visualization is correct, ask, "I am picturing this.....is that right?"

3. Don't interrupt and embrace moments of silence.

- Be patient and allow for moments of silence as these moments promote reflection. Even if the student speaks perfect English, it might take some time to retrieve the proper words to express themselves.
- Provide time- Silence can be uncomfortable but it can be a great invitation for others to open up.
- Avoid interrupting the speaker. This can be a distraction and/or a sign of disrespect. This can cause the speaker to lose their confidence to open up.

4. Withhold judgment and listen with empathy.

- Judgment can quickly stop a conversation.
- The AR should be an unbiased advocate for the student and the host family, which means that the AR might be the only person in the situation who can take a step back and see what is really happening. It is not about who was right or who was wrong. It is about facilitating an open dialogue between the student and host family and helping them to communicate with one another.
- The AR should put oneself in the position of the speaker as they listen. Recognize that if the student is raising concerns, he or she is at a critical point in their exchange experience. In order to comfortably and accurately share their concerns, they should feel supported by the AR and YFU.

5. Clarify and gather more information to ensure a full, deep understanding. AR should confirm that they understood the message correctly and that they understand the most important points.

- Repeat what the student said using the same words and ask for confirmation.
- Paraphrase what the student said using some of these expressions "So what I heard you say was..." "What I understood from what you said was..."

- Or summarize their comments and ask for confirmation that you included everything.
- Ask if there is anything else to say about this? Encourage the speaker to take his/her time. This gives the speaker the chance to reflect for a moment and make sure that they are satisfied with what they have shared.

Strategies for Active Listening

1. Pay attention to the speaker and stay focused. Put away electronic devices.
2. Acknowledge the speaker by nodding or gesturing.
3. Don't interrupt, and embrace moments of silence for reflection.
4. Withhold judgment and listen with empathy.
5. Clarify and gather information; paraphrase to confirm details.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Once the issue has been described and the AR has clarified the issue, the next step of asking questions can begin. This builds on the ideas shared about clarifying and gathering more information.

There are three types of questions to consider when talking with the student and family. Asking open-ended questions encourages a full, meaningful answer that can challenge the speaker to think deeply about his or her knowledge, experiences, and feelings. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with just a one-word response, like yes, or no. When possible, YFU recommends using open-ended questions in lieu of closed-ended (or yes/no questions) or leading questions.

Open-Ended Questions: When asking about the student's relationship with the host family the AR could ask:

Option 1. How is your relationship with your host family? Tell me about that.

Or the AR could say:

Option 2. Do you get along with your family?

Notice that the option 1 question invites the student to share about their relationship and allows them to take a conversation in any direction that they choose. If the student has positive things to share, they can. If the student has some negative things to share, they can also do that.

How is a great question word to use to begin a conversation. **"Tell me more about that..."** Is another great phrase to draw out more details. Be careful- sometimes students or

families need more time to process something and to share details that might be painful or embarrassing. Use good judgment when pressing for more information.

The option 2 question encourages the student to respond with a yes or no response. In addition, necessary details about what "getting along" means for the student is not included in the response.

Another example:

Option 1: Do you like your calculus teacher? This will get a yes/no response, as this is a closed-ended question.

An open-ended question that will help understand the student's perceptions of the calculus teacher and calculus class could be -

Option 2: How is calculus going? or Tell me about your calculus teacher? or Who is your favorite teacher, why? or What classes are difficult, and why?

YFU recommends that when talking to students, Area Representatives use open-ended questions whenever possible.

Closed-Ended Questions: Yes or no questions or closed-ended questions are appropriate in certain circumstances, such as:

- When confirming information is correct: "This is what I heard you say. Is this correct?"
- When requesting specific information: "Are you allergic to anything?"
- When asking for permission: "Do you mind if I ask you a question?" Or "Can I tell your host family about this?"

Cultural Differences

Seek clarifications while listening. When working with people from other cultures, it is very easy to misinterpret what they are saying, both with their words and with their bodies. Keep in mind that things like eye contact, personal space and gestures are all part of a culture and the meanings differ from culture to culture. Don't be afraid to ask questions such as:

- I noticed that you are not looking at me. I am curious, why is that?
- What exactly do you mean by that?
- Is this what you mean?

Leading Questions: The AR should avoid leading questions. Leading questions usually contain a subtle prompt for the responder to reply in a particular way. The question influences the responder to provide a certain answer.

For example:

“What problems do you have with your host family?” – This is a leading question because it assumes that there are problems.

“Tell me about your relationship with your host family?” is a better way to ask the question.

Here is another example:

“Why didn’t you take your cell phone and call your host family to let them know you would be late?” This question puts a blame on the student and assumes that he or she didn’t have their phone with them.

A better question to ask might be: *“Tell me what happened last night and why you got home so late?”* This question invites the student to share their side of the story and does not judge them for what happened.

Review the scenario and take note of how the AR is clarifying and gathering more information.

The exchange student had a loud argument with his same age host brother. The exchange student yelled: “I am leaving; I hate this place.” And then he started to pack his bags. The host mother came into the room and convinced him to stay for at least the night. The next day, the AR came for a visit in the early evening and asked questions similar to the ones below:

- *When you said “I am leaving; I hate this place.” Is it what you really meant? What did you mean?*
- *What were you thinking about when you were packing your bags?*
- *How were you feeling when all of this happened and why?*
- *How do you feel now?*
- *What do you think we should do?*

*The AR will want to hear the student’s story and fully understand what is happening with the student and the host family. Often, the student and/or family will not fully understand their behaviors. The **open-ended questions** used above may spark moments when they realize what truly happened or was intended and create more awareness around their words and actions.*

FIVE STEPS OF PROBLEM SOLVING AND SSM SUPPORT

Challenges and misunderstandings are a natural part of being an exchange student and hosting an exchange student. Challenges and misunderstandings should not be seen as negative, but rather as opportunities for the student and host family to grow and learn more about themselves and each other.

YFU recognizes that different challenges and the severity of these challenges require different types of actions and support from the Area Rep and from YFU. There are a few ways to approach problems. The first strategy is that the host family and the student simply talk to each other. YFU encourages this as it will strengthen the relationship between the student and the family.

If the host family and student are unable to resolve an issue, the next step is for the AR to assist with solving the problem. In this case, the participation of the AR should be requested by either the student, the host family or both, and the SSM needs to be informed in an email about the situation, the plan, and the timeline. Include the FD in the email as well. When working through challenges, ARs should focus on assisting participants in resolving the issue themselves. AR should try NOT to insert a solution immediately, rather facilitate a conversation and ask questions so that the student and family can work through the challenge together. YFU suggests the five-step approach to problem solving/mediation with students and families. As the problem-solving process gets underway, make sure the SSM is informed, especially if there will be a meeting (or mediation) with the AR, student, and host family.

Step 1 - Gather Information

Gather the information and perspectives of everyone involved. This will require the AR to have individual private conversations with the student and the family. Collect as much information as possible. Ask open-ended questions and use active listening skills to ensure all sides of the story have been heard. At the end of each conversation with the individuals, summarize the main points and confirm that everything is accurate.

Six Steps of Problem Solving

1. *Gather Information*
2. *Set the **Ground Rules** with the participants*
3. *Clarify the Issue*
4. *Assist in developing a solution*
5. *Create and implement the solution*
6. *Follow up*

Step 2 - Set The Ground Rules

Confronting challenges can be very uncomfortable for some. Begin the conversation by stating that the goal is for the group to develop a solution together. First, talk with the participants about ground rules for the problem solving process. These “rules” need to be created by the participants. This is important so that they take ownership and responsibility in coming to a solution. See the box for some ideas on “ground rules.”

Possible Ground Rules for Discussions

- *Everyone should share their perspective*
- *Use first names (not he/she)*
- *Avoid interrupting each other*
- *Be honest*
- *Speak in a calm voice*
- *Avoid accusations*
- *Questions should be used to clarify, not attack, blame, or shame*
- *Listen respectfully to one another*
- *Avoid absolutes (such as never, always)*

Step 3 - Clarify the Issue/Problem

Once the ground rules have been established, the AR can explain the process and that the first step is to clarify the issues. Explain that during this phase, all the information will be shared by the AR and both parties need to listen. Ask that they withhold objections until all the information is presented. Restate (without judgment or body language that suggests positives or negatives) what was shared through the independent conversation with the student and the host family. Share all the information that was gathered, including the conflict, and perspectives on why the conflict occurred. This can be done by using phrases such as:

I heard Mrs. Smith say that she feels

I heard Francisco say that he feels.....

I understand that x, y and z occurred.

I understand that the rule is

I understand that Francisco feels the rule is.....

Once this is done, ask if there are different perspectives on what was said. Summarize and describe each area of difficulty and make sure all parties agree that the problem is appropriately identified. For example, an AR might say: “*It seems like the problem is X, Y, and Z? Is this correct?*”

It is possible that the assessment of the problem is not correct. Take the time to talk as a group to come to consensus on the issue. Sometimes there may be a small problem that is related to a larger problem. Or, possibly a

small problem is a symptom of a larger, more significant problem. Start with the small problem first. For example, perhaps the student broke curfew. As the AR talks with the student and family, the real issue might be that the student has trouble with authority and rules and he is used to more independence in his home country. In this case one could see this as a cultural difference and to some degree cultural adjustment may be part of the challenge. This should be acknowledged and a conversation about this cultural difference needs to be included in the problem solving approach.

Step 4 - Assist in Developing a Solution

Once everyone has agreed on what the issue is, try to come up with possible solutions. The Area Representative’s role is to assist the host family and student in coming up with their own solutions. Creating their own solutions provides a sense of ownership in the solution; they are more likely to develop a plan that will actually work for them. Remember, there is always more than one way to solve an issue, so encourage participants to look at each other’s perspectives and come up with a few different ideas.

In many cases, creating a list of possible solutions is a productive way to start. Let each person put forth ideas. Don’t judge or discount any idea even if the solution does not seem appropriate. Review each possible solution and then guide the participants in looking at the positives and negatives of each idea. Use additional questions to help participants come to a solution that they think can work.

Possible questions for Developing a Solution

- *What are some of the ways in which we could solve this issue?*
- *Family, what would make you comfortable?*
- *Student, what would make you comfortable?*
- *What are some compromises that everyone should consider?*

Step 5 - Create and implement resolution

Once the list of possible solutions is narrowed down, ask participants which solution (or solutions) they would like to implement. Support the student and the host family to create a plan that will work for both parties. The agreed upon solution(s) should be specific and have concrete steps that will foster success. Confirm with the participants that the plan is realistic and has their full commitment to following through with it.

After the meeting, report back to the SSM in an email to share the student and host family plan to provide appropriate documentation and to help the SSM design next steps, if needed.

Possible discussion questions for Implementing Resolution

- Which of these solutions would really allow the issue to be resolved?
- How does everyone feel or think about this solution?
- Is there anything else we need to add to it to make it a success?
- What are the exact steps that everyone will need to take in moving forward?

Step 6 - Follow-up

At the end of the conversation, determine together when the AR should follow-up to see how things are going. At the mutually agreed upon time, follow-up with the student and the host family to see whether things have improved. Hopefully they overcame the challenge and were brought even closer together. However, once these steps have occurred, if the problem persists or even escalates, inform the SSM who will become more involved and propose additional solutions.

SUPPORT FROM THE SSM

In some cases, the support from the AR may not be enough to solve the issue and additional solutions may be required. In cases where the student has broken a rule (or YFU policy) or the student and family are in extreme conflict, the Support Services Manager may implement one (or a combination) of the following solutions.

1. Request a mediation session with the AR, student, and host family
2. Connect with Field Director for Student Replacement (meaning remove the student from the current home)
3. Issue an Encouragement, Warning letter, or Probation Letter
4. Place a student On Probation
5. Recommend an Early Return to the Home Country

An SSM implements these options, and each option entails several steps. To determine the best solution the nature of the issue is defined by obtaining input from everyone involved. This will include the SSM reviewing the AR's MCRs and additional notes sent via email describing the challenges. The MCR and AR notes create an important paper trail for documentation purposes. In addition, the SSM will ask the AR about their observations and interactions with the family.

Solution # 1- Request a Mediation session with the AR, Student, and Host Family

The SSM may suggest a mediation with the host family and student. The SSM will talk with the AR about the issue and coach the AR on leading the mediation. Often times, this is a successful strategy as mediation allows all stakeholders to openly discuss the challenges and come to a solution together. See page 17 or for details about problem solving and leading a mediation.

Solution #2 - Connect with the Field Director for a Student Replacement

The Support Services Manager in consultation with the Area Representative and the Field Director may decide the student needs to move to a new host family. This can occur for a variety of reasons. **Replacement is never the first solution unless student safety is at stake.**

A certain number of students each year will be moved to a new family. This is a normal occurrence in student exchange. In most cases moves bring lessons and growth in each situation, even if all parties do not recognize it at the time. In some cases, the SSM or FD may ask the AR to help find a replacement family.

SSMs and FDs may decide to move a student move because:

- The student and host family are not a good fit; there are regular arguments and/or ongoing problems between the student and family. Despite best efforts from both the student and the family, as well as YFU facilitated mediation, the living situation remains tense.
- Change in the host family situation such as financial problems, job loss, change in residence or marital status that causes extreme stress to the household
- Poor behavior on the part of the student
- Poor behavior on the part of the family; concerns about student's well-being with the family.

Solution #3 - Issue an Encouragement, Warning Letter, or Probation Letter

If a student is struggling in a specific area (such as homesickness, speaking English, or academic difficulties) and the student is taking steps to improve, a letter of encouragement is a great strategy to keep the student motivated and congratulate him or her on their progress. Some letters also include additional strategies to help the student with the situation. The AR can request a letter of encouragement from an SSM, and often the SSM and AR will talk about how the student is improving and specific examples that the SSM can cite in the letter. Reach out to the SSM if a student could use some additional encouragement.

A probation letter follows a similar procedure and occurs when an SSM places a student on probation. The SSM will issue the letter to the student, host family, the AR and the sending country when an policy infraction is more severe, or when a student has not changed his/her behavior after a warning letter is issued. See below for additional details about when a student is placed on probation.

Solution #4 - Place a Student on Probation

If the student continues to engage in the behaviors that required a warning letter, or a new serious behavior problem emerges, the next corrective action is for the SSM to place the student on probation. This indicates that the student is at risk of an Early Return - meaning that the student could be sent home before his/her program is scheduled to end. Students can be placed on probation when a warning letter has been issued, but even with reasonable time for change, there has been little or no improvement. Another rationale for placing a student on probation could be if there are serious problems and issues that justify an Early Return but the Field Director or Support Services Manager is recommending a "last chance."

Solution #5- Recommend an Early Return to the Home Country

The last resort for extreme cases where warning letters, probation, and other consequences are not correcting certain behaviors, is the student's early return to his or

her country. The SSM will review all the documentation including email communications from the AR and the MCRs when this decision is being considered. This decision is not taken lightly and much thought and discussion at YFU occurs if an Early Return is being considered. The YFU USA President must approve all early returns based on student behavior.

Corrective actions can occur in a "sequential" process if a behavior is not improving. However, pending the severity of the behavior, corrective actions can occur independent of one another, and/or there may be more than one corrective action. **Remember: An AR cannot issue warning letters, probation, or Early Returns and should NEVER threaten the student with any of the corrective actions.**

As a key part of the YFU support structure, the AR's guidance, advice and support help the host family and student adjust to living together. The documentation by the AR keeps YFU in compliance and allows the SSM to fully understand the situation and take appropriate actions. Youth For Understanding knows that dealing with problems can be stressful but remember that the AR is not alone in working with students and families. YFU thanks the ARs for being there for YFU students and host families and helping them both to navigate challenges and to celebrate their successes.



IV. MONTHLY CONTACT REPORTS

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF THE MCR

The Monthly Contact Report (MCR) is the tool used to document that YFU is providing support to the students and host families during exchange. The MCR has a total of six questions and it needs to be completed and submitted online by the 25th of each month.

Monthly Contact Report

- Six questions
- Due on the 25th of each month
- Short answers and narrative responses
- Provide specific examples about behaviors to document the situation
- Narrative answers (questions 4 and 5) require 400 characters
- Question six requires a “click” to request SSM assistance

The report is made up of two sections. The first section asks for the date of contact, how contact was made, who was contacted (the student or family), and who made contact (this is pre-populated based on who logged in to the account). The last part of this section asks if the student’s contact information has changed. This is important so that YFU staff can update this important information in the database.

The next section is made up of two questions that require narrative responses (at least 400 characters are required for each narrative question in order to submit the MCR) describing how the student and host family are adjusting to the placement. There are two parts within each narrative response. Part One requires an assessment of the student and family within specific areas of adjustment. Part Two requires the AR to describe the support plan that he or she will take, if there are concerns. The last question on the report is a YES or NO question regarding whether follow-up is needed by the SSM. By clicking YES, the SSM will receive an alert and will be in touch with the AR. ARs can also submit a report if they didn’t reach a student and/ or host family. ARs should document their attempts or describe why they could not make contact.

SECTION 2: NARRATIVE QUESTIONS - ASSESSING STUDENT & FAMILY ADJUSTMENT

When completing the narrative section of the report, the AR will need to think about their conversations with the student (and family) and their observations of how the student and family interact. Having meaningful conversations with both the student and family are necessary in order to understand how they are adjusting to one another. The report requires the AR to assess several areas of adjustment, such as adjustment in school, adapting to social norms, progress on learning English, fitting in with the family and following family expectations. For each area of adjustment, use the following examples to help determine how to assess the student’s progress in adapting and adjustment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Use the examples below to assess the **student’s adjustment to life with the host family.**

A student who is adjusting well within the host family:	A student who is adjusting well within the host family:
Communicates openly and often with the family and shares information about him or herself, and his/her home culture. Shares frustrations and challenges and seeks advice from the family. Asks questions and shows a desire to learn from the family.	Isolates him or herself from the family and spends excessive time alone in the bedroom. Does not seek or follow advice from the host family. Shows little interest in the family.
Shows respect to the family and follows family expectations. Respectfully asks questions about family expectations/rules if he or she does not understand or makes a mistake.	Is disrespectful to the host family. Does not seek clarity on rules or expectations.
Willingly joins in family activities and/or initiates family activities (for example taking care of the family pet, playing games with siblings, cooking a meal for others, teaching family members his/her native language, participating in chore day, asking about family traditions, etc.)	Does not participate in family activities and turns down invitations for family time. Does not show interest in family activities or traditions.
Helps with household chores and follows family rules.	Must be asked multiple times to complete assigned chores. Completes chores reluctantly.

Student adjustment to school - If school personnel have contacted the family expressing concerns about the student’s adjustment, performance and/or participation, this should be noted in the report. If the school does not respond to AR contact, please make note of the contact attempts when completing this report.

A student who is adjusting well to school:	A student who is not adjusting well to school:
Attends school regularly and on time.	Has school attendance issues; is often sick, or “skips.” Often late to school; school reports that student is tardy.
Is earning average or better than average grades.	Is not engaged in school and teachers or school personnel report academic or behavioral problems.
Seeks academic help from teachers, as needed.	The student has academic performance issues and is not submitting homework or studying for tests as needed.
Has joined after school clubs, sports, and activities. Or shows an interest to join a specific group and is making plans to do so.	Has not joined any extra-curricular activities and shows no interest in joining any school activities or clubs.
Is enrolled in appropriate classes with a balance of academic classes and electives classes.	Is taking classes that are too difficult or too easy.

For non-native speakers of English, the AR should consider the **student’s progress in developing English skills**.

A student who is making good progress with language:	A student who is having challenges with language:
Is making an effort to improve English skills.	Does not try to improve and remains silent during family conversations.
Shows an expanding vocabulary.	Does not understand basic instructions and simple requests.
Expresses him or herself clearly in conversations.	Depends on a dictionary or electronic translator for more than a few weeks, little to no effort to move away from reliance on translators.
Can be understood by the majority of those talking with student regardless of his/her accent.	Uses native language (non-English) whenever possible.

When **assessing a student's progress in making friends and connecting socially**, the AR should think about the student's efforts and actions with friends in school and in the community.

A student who is adjusting well socially:	A student who is not adjusting well socially:
Is making friends.	Shows minimal or no indication of making friends.
Participates in extracurricular and/or community activities.	Does not participate in any extra-curricular activities.
Actively involved in public areas of home and initiates engaging in social activities.	Spends excessive time isolated (in own room or wearing headphones or earbuds).
Shares ideas in different settings (such as at the grocery store or shopping mall, at restaurants, with teammates or club members).	Is frequently silent and not contributing when given opportunities to be social. Only speaks when at home.
Accepts appropriate invitations and initiates social outings with friends.	Avoids social contact and is making questionable friends.

YFU orientations and YFU social activities are important ways that YFU supports students and families. If there were YFU activities or orientations held during the month, think about the student's involvement at the event, and/or state if the student participated in a webinar.

A student who attended YFU orientations/ activities:	A student who did not attend YFU orientations/ activities:
Actively participated in a YFU orientation or YFU social activity	Participated in a YFU orientation but exhibited inappropriate or negative behavior or failed to attend. Did not inform YFU in advance of inability to attend.
Arranged to make up the orientation if a scheduling conflict could not be avoided.	Made no attempt to arrange to make up the orientation or receive YFU materials

Here are a few examples of assessing a student's ability to follow **YFU and host family rules and social norms**. If the student is having difficulty with expectations and rules, be sure to provide details and a brief description of what occurred.

A student who follows YFU and host family rules and social norms:	A student who does not follow YFU and host family rules and social norms:
Adjusts table manners to reflect host family manners and joins family for meals.	Continually follows home country table manners or does not sit with family during meals.
Follows household rules regarding social media use, technology, and being online.	Uses social media and technology inappropriately and not according to YFU and host family rules.
Contact with home country family and friends is reasonable and is not preventing the student from adjusting. Limits contact with natural family and friends as requested by host family and YFU	Is in daily or too frequent contact with natural family and friends. Contact with home country family and friends is preventing the student from adjusting to life in the US.

FAMILY ASSESSMENT

Question Five requires the AR to have a conversation with the host family with the intent of assessing and describing the host family’s perspective on the exchange experience. Include in the conversation an assessment of the family’s hosting experience so far, the family’s impression of the student’s adjustment, and verifying any important changes in the household. In addition, it is important for the AR to note the family’s actions and behaviors and take into consideration if the family is providing the student with an opportunity to learn and grow while on exchange. The AR’s written narrative about their conversations and observations completes this MCR question.

Examples of **Family Adjustment to assess the family’s progress** in adjusting to the student and providing the student with an opportunity to learn and grow while on exchange.

Example Questions to Assess Family Adjustment

- *How is this experience affecting your family?*
- *How is your student getting along with each family member?*
- *What has been challenging and has this been discussed with the student?*
- *Is your student growing through this experience, how so?*
- *Tell me about the kinds of adjustments your family has been making?*

A family who is adjusting well with their student:	A family who is not adjusting well and may need additional support from the AR or SSM:
Feels like their student is gradually becoming part of the family; (keep in mind, this does take some time and is a gradual process).	Feels that the student is not connecting with them and they feel their student is not taking necessary steps to transition from being a guest to being a family member.
Is happy with the student’s engagement in family activities and the family enjoys hosting.	Family is not reaching out to the student, or inviting the student to participate in family activities.
Acknowledges that there can be challenges when hosting a student and is open to feedback and discussion about these challenges.	Is not willing to solve or is not actively trying to solve problems with student. Family is reluctant (or refuses) to talk with the AR about problem solving.
Sees challenges and conflicts as opportunities for growth and learning for all (student and family). Family is comfortable talking openly with student to find solutions.	Hosting is stressful to the family. Common adjustment challenges are not being addressed within the family. The family prefers to ignore problems, rather than discuss and work together to find solutions.
Family is excited to learn about the student and the student’s culture and traditions. Recognizes and appreciates that each student is different and he/she may not be exactly how the family expected.	Family compares the current student with past students or other students. Expectations of the student are not appropriate.
Host parent roles are clear and host parents provide family guidelines and hold the student accountable for his/her behavior (and discipline as necessary).	Host parents are “being a friend” instead of a parent. Student behaviors are not being corrected and the student is confused on how to behave appropriately due to lack of guidance from the host parents.

SECTION 3: DOCUMENTATION AND SSM SUPPORT

The examples above are illustrative, and all behaviors should be taken into consideration when assessing the student and the family’s adjustment. Responses for questions Four (student adjustment) and Five (family adjustment) combined must equal at least 400 characters. This equates to four or five sentences for each question. **This is the minimal amount.** It is best to provide more information.

For each area above, the AR needs to provide details about the student’s and family’s actions that demonstrate the rating in the assessment. **Provide concrete examples, use quotations, and provide specific examples of behaviors.**

Following the assessment (and the details that document the AR’s reasoning for the assessment), the AR needs to describe the follow-up plans for areas of concern. For example, if the student is not doing well in school, describe the plans to bring the student back on track and make a direct request that the SSM looks closer at this concern (if this is necessary).

The Area Rep is not expected to solve all student and family challenges and it is best to **reach out to the SSM as soon as a problem (or potential problem) is detected.** If the AR is unsure of how to help the student or family, the SSM should be contacted to provide coaching to the AR, or provide direct support to the student and family. This needs to occur in two ways. The first way is by clicking **YES** to the last question (question Six) on the MCR; the SSM will receive an alert and be in touch with the AR. As this might not be seen by the SSM immediately, contact the SSM via phone or email to provide details to the SSM and develop a plan of action as soon as possible. The earlier an SSM is involved, the better the chances are that the problem will be resolved with little or no disruption to the student or family.

Question Six

*This final question asks if an SSM should provide follow-up. This is a YES or NO question. Review the report and click YES if there is a problem, or concern of which the SSM should be made aware. **If there are any concerns relating to the safety or security of the student or family, the AR MUST click YES for SSM assistance AND contact the SSM immediately via phone.***

For non-emergencies, the SSM will initiate a consultation process with the AR to solve the problem together. In addition, YFU may need to report the issue to the international partner. Details in the MCR with specific examples from the AR will provide essential information that YFU USA will use in speaking with the partner about the case.

Additional Behaviors To Report to SSMs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health issues, such as significant weight change, not eating or sleeping, ongoing headaches or body pains and mental health concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive crying or homesickness - while many students become homesick at some point during their exchange, identify extreme cases; ongoing self-isolating behaviors should also be reported
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive communication with family and friends in the home country and if the student misses school and family activities due to staying in close contact with those at home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated bad behaviors (such as defiance of authority, breaking of rules)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious academic difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme host family / student personality issues or student behaviors like drug or alcohol use



V. AR ASSISTANCE WITH REPLACEMENT FAMILIES

In some cases, the Support Services Manager and the Field Director may make a decision that the student will need to move to a new host family. This can occur for a variety of reasons. When this happens, an AR may be asked to help find a replacement family for the student; however, not all FDs ask ARs to assist in the replacement process. Talk with the local FD about their approach to replacement families and what kind of help they would like from the AR.

In some locations, FDs ask ARs to help families through the application and interview process. This is especially helpful when YFU needs to quickly find a new family for a student. Keep in mind that ARs are not responsible for determining if a family is eligible to host, YFU staff make that decision. However, an AR can reach out to new host families and share information about hosting, guide the family through the application process, conduct the host family interview, and answer questions about the student and the hosting experience. In addition, students themselves can put forward ideas about replacement families, such as their friends' families. A student's coaches, teachers, and other adults in the student's life may also have ideas about families who can welcome the student into their home in a replacement situation.

Talk with the FD about replacement situations and think together about how much information is shared about why a replacement is occurring (as a potential family may ask about this). Sometimes this is sensitive information and confidentiality needs to be respected. The main components of the Host Family application process are:

1. Create a YFU login and password by completing the online host family interest survey
2. Complete the 16 sections of the online application, which include questions about who lives in the home, workplace, income, etc.
3. Sign the host family agreement
4. Submit the criminal background check
5. Upload photos of the home, including the proposed student bedroom
6. Complete two reference checks
7. Schedule and conduct an in-home interview

Once all of these are completed, YFU staff reviews the entire application and determines host family eligibility and fit for the student. Be sure to talk with the FD about their approach to finding host families and follow their lead. They often have specific suggestions on finding replacement families and they have important knowledge about schools and communities. See Appendix 5 for additional instructions on working with FDs to manage a replacement.

PRE-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION REQUIREMENT FOR REPLACEMENT FAMILIES

If the replacement family is not already hosting with YFU, they must participate in a Pre-Arrival Orientation as required by the US Department of State. Ideally, this happens BEFORE the student arrives in the home. However, in certain emergency situations where the student's safety is a concern, the student can be moved to the host family prior to the Pre-Arrival, as determined by YFU staff (the FD and/or SSM). If the student moves into the home prior to the host family completing the Pre-Arrival, the host family should fulfill this Pre Arrival requirement within a week of the student's arrival. In most cases, the AR helps ensure the family participates in the Pre-Arrival before the student arrives in the home.

In a replacement situation, there are two options for a family to complete the Pre-Arrival requirement swiftly. The self-paced online course can be accessed through the Host Family account. This 45-minute course lays out the critical information about YFU policies, safety, sexual abuse prevention, cultural adjustment, and tips for families. To meet the requirement, the participant must complete all the modules in the course. The family can download and print or save a certificate when they have completed the course; attendance tracking is automated.

Alternatively, the AR, another volunteer, or the FD can provide a One-On-One Pre-Arrival Orientation. The one-on-one is a sit-down conversation with the family. Content for the Pre-Arrival Orientation can be found on the website and volunteers can seek additional clarification on the content by contacting either the FD or the Education & Training Department at YFU. Documentation (as described on the website) of the one-on-one must be submitted to E&T as soon as possible for record-keeping purposes.

APPENDIX 1: YFU ACRONYM LIST

YFU PROGRAMMATIC ACRONYMS

AC	Area Coordinator
APP	Application
AR	Area Representative
CDR	Change Departure Request
ELTiS	English Language Test for International Students
FD	Field Director
HF	Host Family
IER	Involuntary Early Return
IS	International Student
NF	Natural Father
NM	Natural Mother
NO	National Office
NP	Natural Parents
NVAC	National Volunteer Advisory Council
OC	Outreach Coordinator
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
RD	Regional Director
RS	Registration Specialist
SA	Study Abroad
SLEP	Secondary Level English Proficiency Test
SSM	Support Services Manager
STD	Student
VER	Voluntary Early Return
VOL	Volunteer
YFU	Youth For Understanding

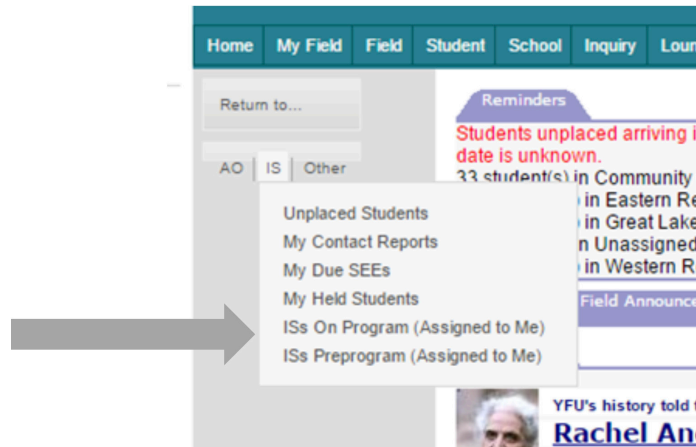
YFU SCHOLARSHIP ACRONYMS

CSP	Corporate Scholarship Programs
FCCLA	Family Careers and Community Leaders of America
FUYSE	Finland-US Senate Youth Exchange
JAFS	Japan American Friendship Scholars
JUMP	Japan-US Mutual Understanding Program
JUSSE	Japan-US Senate Youth Exchange Scholarship

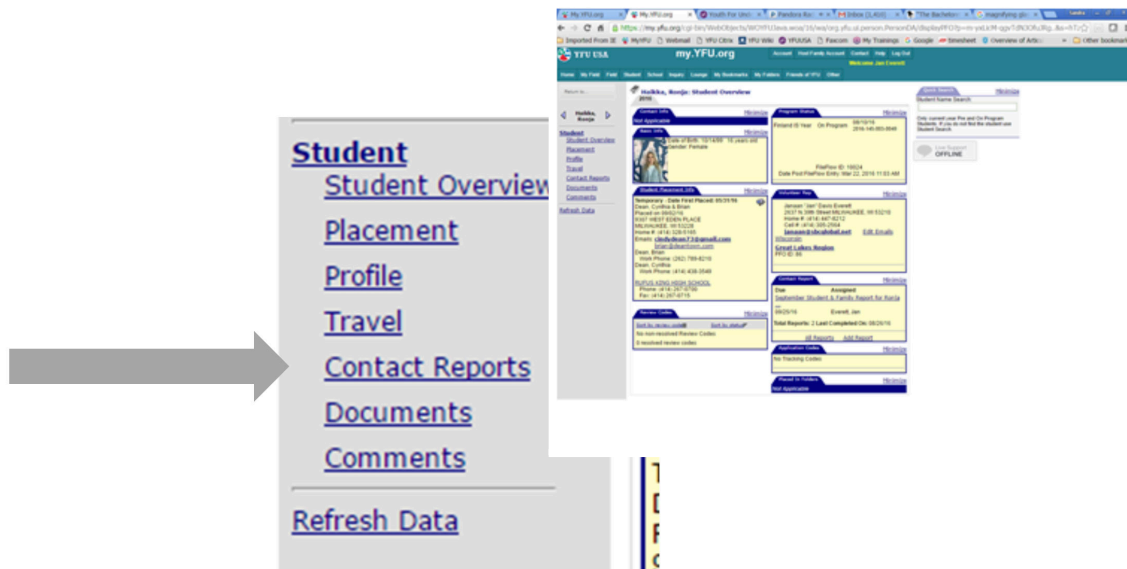
APPENDIX 2: ACCESSING AND SUBMITTING THE MCR

ACCESSING THE MCR

- Using the AR's volunteer user name and password, log into **my.yfu.org**.
- From the home screen, hover the cursor over IS all the way to the left, and there are several options on the drop down menu to open. In order to see all the students that the AR is “repping” click on **ISs on Program (Assigned to Me)**

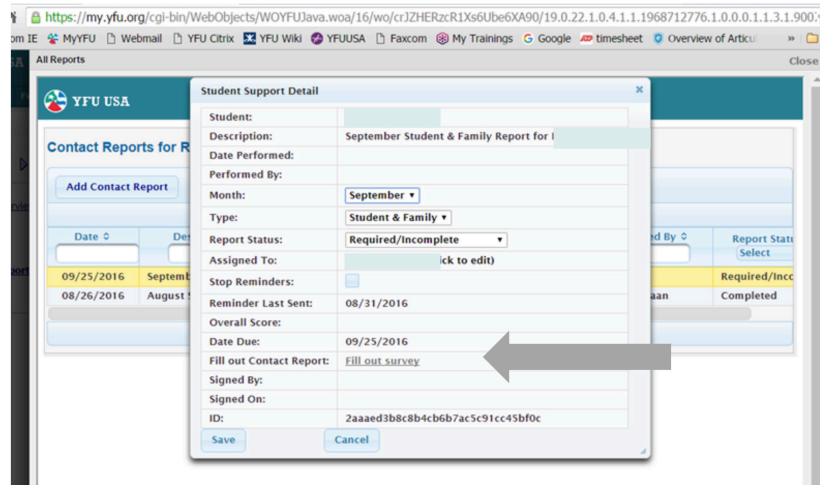


- This will generate a list of all the students that the AR is “repping”
- Click on the student for whom to submit a report.



- Click on the Contact Report option on the left.
- Choose and click on the MCR for the specific month (highlighted in light yellow) to access the report OR **Add Contact Report** if there is an additional report submitted within the month.

- Click on **Fill out survey** to open the report.



- Complete the report. Note the scroll bar on the right, to scroll up and down to look through the entire report.

SUBMITTING THE MCR

- The AR should fill in their electronic signature and then click **Sign and Submit**. An e-signature was created while getting log in information and setting up the Volunteer account. This can be changed this by clicking on the e-signature link in the report.
- Alternatively, one can **SAVE** the report and return later to finish it.



NOTE: If contact for both the student and the family was not completed at the same time, enter information for either student or host family first, then click **SAVE**.

- Return to the top of the MCR and in question one, click **ADD** to enter the information for the other participant.
- Once all the information has been entered, click **Sign and Submit**. The electronic signature will be used at this time.

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MCR

Question: Does the report for the family and student have to be submitted at the same time?

Answer: Yes, in order to sign and submit, both narrative questions about the student and the family need to be completed.

Question: Can more than one report be submitted per month?

Answer: Yes, if the AR has contact with the student and there is important information to share, use the Add Contact Report to complete another report. This is especially good to do if there were concerns that are actively being followed up and there are updates (both positive and negative).

Question: What if the report cannot be completed on time?

Answer: If the student and host family were contacted, but the report is not able to be submitted on time (by the 25th of the month), please complete as soon as possible. The report allows the AR to document the date contact was made, even if the report is submitted after the required date. If the AR will be out of town or other scheduling issues prevent the AR from contacting a student and host family, inform the YFU Field Director so that another volunteer can be assigned for that month. Alert the student and host family as a courtesy.

Question: Who may be contacted for help or additional questions about this report?

Answer: Please email volunteers@yfu.org for any additional questions about completing the report

APPENDIX 3: STUDENT SUPPORT SCENARIOS

On the next pages are four student scenarios. Using the information in this manual read through the scenarios and consider some possible solutions. Think about appropriate responses and how an Area Representative could provide assistance. Take on notes on potential actions and then check the “solutions” that are recommended by YFU SSM. For further discussions about these email: SSMs@yfu.org and request for a follow up call about the scenarios. In addition, connect with other ARs and together discuss the scenarios and recommend follow up steps.

SCENARIO 1: KARIN FROM LITHUANIA

Karin is a student from Lithuania. She has excellent English and is very bright.

Karin’s host family has no children at home and she is attending a small school in a rural location. Karin reports that her host mother is too strict about what she wears and where she wants to go and doesn’t like the friends she is choosing at school. She is not an athlete and has chosen not to get involved in school activities but would rather hang out with friends, and does not want to go to church with her host parents. She spends a great deal of time on her cell phone and on the internet; and oftentimes wears her headphones in common areas of the host family home. She is very unhappy and wants to feel the “greatest year of her life” that her friends in Lithuania told her she would have here.

Host Mom Janice works very hard and does not come home until late. She was very excited to have a “daughter” and could not wait to host Karin., as she has not had any biological children of her own. She thought that she and Karin would bond immediately and do all sorts of things together, especially her hobby which is caring for the many plants she has in her greenhouse. She has discovered that though Karin wrote on her application that she “helps her mother in the garden” at home, that meant the mowing the lawn, not planting and growing things. Janice does not like that Karin spends so much time in her room, on the internet, and on her cell phone. She does not like the way she dresses for school, and is dismayed that Karin is not helping her do any housework, even though chores were clearly discussed when Karin arrived.

1. What are the issues?
2. Identify the issues- which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which of the issues have guidelines or policies from YFU.
3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation.

SCENARIO 2: NAO FROM CHINA

Nao is a 15-year-old from China with excellent English.

His host family consists of two Protestant pastors, Dean and Karen Smith, and two, young adopted children from China, Ashley and Hannah. The host parents want their kids to learn about their heritage from Nao. For the first few days, everything went swimmingly. Then almost abruptly, communication ceased, Nao refuses to spend any time with the children, his grades have dropped from B to D in math and English, and Nao has announced to his Area Rep that he hates the food. He has been with the current host family for a month.

Nao’s host mother is frustrated that this is not at all working out as YFU had promised. She wants Nao to spend time with her children, to do things with them as a family; that includes things Nao doesn’t enjoy, like watching science fiction movies. The host mother also says Nao is not eating with them out at home, and most of all, Nao believes that the 15 minutes of conversation he has with whichever adult happens to be home when he arrives is enough conversation for the day. Nao’s host mother reports that once this 15 minutes of time has passed, Nao ensconces himself in his room, and reappears only after their dinner is over and the kitchen cleaned up, in order to raid the fridge and eat anything and everything in sight.

1. What are the issues?
2. Identify the issues- which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which of the issues have guidelines or policies from YFU.
3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation.

SCENARIO 3: ALEXANDRA FROM GERMANY

Alexandra is a 17-year-old girl from Germany.

Her host family has hosted two other German girls successfully. Alexandra is less serious and more social than the two former students. Alexandra feels a responsibility to her host parents but wishes she could accept a friend's offer to be her host family. Alexandra feels that her host parents are comparing her unfavorably to the previous exchange students. Although they don't object to her friends, they criticize her social life and want her to spend more time at home. Alexandra is doing well in school, but they complain that she doesn't take school as seriously as the other girls did. Alexandra feels that her host parents don't accept her as her own person. Moreover, they seem tired of hosting and planning activities that would interest her. They have also gotten lax about preparing meals and Alexandra sometimes goes out to eat with friends because there's no meal at home.

Alexandra's host parents have loved hosting with YFU and keep in very close touch with their former students. They were very excited to choose Alexandra since she 'fit the mold' of their other international kids, with whom they got along very well. Now they feel that Alexandra is too independent. The host mother does not work and would like to welcome Alexandra home from school every day and have a little time together, to work on her English and talk about the day. This routine always worked well in years past. Alexandra's host father always makes himself available to help with homework after dinner. He is discouraged that Alexandra hasn't taken him up on it yet.

1. What are the issues?
2. Identify the issues- which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which of the issues have guidelines or policies from YFU.
3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation.

SCENARIO 4: GRETA FROM GERMANY

Greta is a 17-year-old girl from Germany.

She lives with a farming family in an urban location- two host parents and two younger siblings (8 and 10). Greta is very social and participates in many school activities, because she loves to be busy and to be with her friends. The high school is about 15 minutes from the family's home and the nearest city with a mall is about half an hour away. Greta likes her host parents but does not want to hang out with them always. Greta's siblings keep barging into her room and wanting her attention when she is busy chatting or texting with friends. She doesn't feel like there is anyone in the home to talk to. She was hoping to be placed with a family in the city who had children her own age. Greta was not able to go to the basketball game because the host parents couldn't take her.

Greta's host parents spend a lot of time working their land and taking care of the livestock and house. They do not want to spend their spare time running Greta to the mall 20 miles away to be with her friends. The host parents are quiet people who communicate by doing not by talking. They generally like Greta. Sometimes they feel like they are just a bed and breakfast and/or a taxi for Greta as she is always asking to go out with friends or go to a store. They worry that their children are getting on Greta's nerves because she is always telling them to get out of her room. Greta snapped at the younger child recently and made her cry. This made the HF very upset.

1. What are the issues?
2. Identify the issues- which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which of the issues have guidelines or policies from YFU.
3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation.

SOLUTIONS TO SCENARIO QUESTIONS

SOLUTIONS FOR SCENARIO # 1 - KARIN FROM LITHUANIA

1. What are the issues?

Karin's social life:

Expectations for how often Karin can go out with her friends need to be set early. There will need to be a conversation about the importance of developing a social life in the US, and making American friends, but also making sure she spends enough time with her host family and respects their boundaries re: going out with friends.

Religious services:

If Karin indicated on her application that she does not want to attend religious services at all, she should not be expected to. If she indicated that she was willing to try, we would hope that she would try one or two services. If she indicated that she was willing to attend regularly, a discussion will need to take place if she has changed her mind (because the HF will be expecting her to attend regularly). We would hope that Karin would give the service(s) a try and then make her decision, but we also never want to force a student to attend religious services.

Electronics:

Karin should be asked not to wear her headphones in the common areas of the home. The host family should decide what their boundaries are regarding electronics and let Karin know (for example, how many hours a day can she be on them, where in the home, etc.). If Karin is still on electronics constantly after it has been discussed, a warning letter from YFU USA may be in order.

Expectations:

The host mother expected Karin to be like the daughter she never had, and expected them to have the same interests and to bond immediately. Karin expected this to be the greatest year of her life. They both need gentle reminders that those expectations were unrealistic.

Chores:

Karin should be contributing by doing some appropriate chores. It should be explained to Karin that this is very normal in American culture and will help her feel like part of the family.

Karin's clothing:

There will need to be a conversation about this between Karin and the host mother, probably with the AR's help. Things to keep in mind: what are the host mother's expectations re: clothing? Is there a dress code at school? Can Karin afford to change her wardrobe?

2. Identify which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which have guidelines from YFU.

Adolescent issues:

Wanting to spend so much time with friends, dress code, unrealistic expectations, electronics

Cultural differences:

Chores could be (many of our students do not do chores in their home country), dress code, religious services

Adjustment to a different culture:

All of these issues could potentially be adjusting to a different culture. It would be helpful to ask Karin about each of these issues in Lithuania, and then explain "In the US, it is customary to....."

The following issues have guidelines from YFU (these are taken from the YFU Policies):

Religious services:

"Exchange students and their host families frequently have very different ideas about religion. YFU encourages

students to join their host families in all their activities, including religious services, unless the students' beliefs make it impossible. It is the student's choice, however, to attend or not to attend services."

Electronics:

"Excessive telephone, e-mail or internet use, the visiting of inappropriate internet sites or the creation of such sites that appear to pose danger to the student or host family will result in warning or probation and if the behavior is not corrected, consideration of Early Return. Refer to the Cell Phone Guidelines for Students and Host Families and Computer Use and Internet Safety Guidelines for Students and Host Families for more detailed guidelines."

3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation:

*For resolving the religious services issue, check Karin's application and discuss with the host family what her answers were; as well as YFU's policy (above).

*For resolving the social life, electronics, chores, and clothing issues, Karin and her host family should have mutually agreed upon guidelines that Karin is expected to follow. They may need to compromise on some of these issues and this may require a mediation.

*For resolving the unrealistic expectations that Karin and the host mother have, they will may both need to be reminded throughout the exchange year to focus on reality, not what their expectations were.

SOLUTIONS FOR SCENARIO # 2 - NAO FROM CHINA

1. What are the issues?

Isolation:

Nao needs to be reminded that the host family wants him to participate in activities with them and spend more time in common areas of the home. Nao should be asked what he does with his family in China (he may just be doing what he does at home). Nao should be provided with specific things the host family would like him to do. For example, watch science fiction movies with them at least two times a week, spend x amount of time in the living room when the family is at home, eat all meals with the family, help with whatever chores the family has assigned to him, play games with his host siblings at least two times a week, etc.

Grades:

Many of our students struggle academically. It is important to find out what the root of the issue is: are they struggling with their English, are they placed in the wrong level of classes, do they have a learning disability, is it apathy, do they understand the material but are neglecting to complete assignments/homework, etc.?

Diet/Food:

This is also a common issue. American food is quite different than what many of our students are used to. Nao should be asked what he eats at home. He should be encouraged to cook a Chinese meal for the host family. Nao should also be encouraged to eat whatever the host family eats, and give it some time - he may decide he likes it. In his case, it appears that he does like their food since he is eating it after the family eats; it may be more of an issue of getting him accustomed to eating with the family.

2. Identify which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which have guidelines from YFU.

Adolescent issues:

Isolation from adults, eating a lot

Cultural differences:

The amount of time Nao spends with the family could be cultural, food, the grades could be

Adjustment to a different culture:

All of these could be related to Nao adjusting to our culture

The following issues have guidelines from YFU (these are taken from the YFU Policies):

Academics:

“Allowing for an initial period of linguistic and/or academic adjustment, a student is expected to achieve an adequate school academic record. It is expected that YFU students maintain an overall “C” average or better in academic classes. Within a reasonable period of time, poor motivation, underachievement (e. g. failing grades) or inappropriate behavior, in combination with poor adjustment in general, will be cause for Early Return consideration.”

3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation:

See above under #1.

SOLUTIONS FOR SCENARIO # 3 - ALEXANDRA FROM GERMANY

1. What are the issues?

Expectations:

The host family expects Alexandra to be like their previous students.

Mealtime expectations:

The host family probably expects Alexandra to be there for meals, but if there is no meal sometimes, Alexandra is probably confused.

Schedules:

The host mother would like Alexandra to come home directly after school and spend time with her and the host father would like to help Alexandra with her homework. Alexandra should be aware of what her host parents want to do with her schedule, and she is allowed to have some suggestions of her own.

2. Identify which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a difference culture, and which have guidelines from YFU.

Adolescent issues:

Mealtime expectations and scheduling could be adolescent issues. Many adolescents would prefer to be with their friends over spending time with their family. However, in Alexandra’s case, it seems like the host family’s expectations for these issues may not have been made clear to her.

Cultural differences:

Teenagers in Germany sometimes have more freedom and autonomy with their schedules than American teenagers. This could be cultural.

Guidelines from YFU:

Host families are responsible for providing three meals a day. If the host family is neglecting to provide dinner for Alexandra, that should be discussed (it’s ok if they are not home or do not cook something every night, but there should be food in the home that the student knows how to prepare).

3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation:

4. Expectations:

The host family should be reminded (by the Area Rep) that Alexandra is a different person than their other students were, and it is ok that she is different. The host family probably does not even realize that they are making Alexandra feel lesser than their former students. They should be given specific examples of their behaviors that are making the student feel this way, and encouraged to focus on the positive qualities of Alexandra. Alexandra should also be told that the Area Rep had that conversation with the host family. It will make her feel better to know it was discussed.

Mealtime expectations and schedule:

This is a conversation that should happen between Alexandra and the host family. They may need the Area Rep to

help out with this as well; but not necessarily. The host family should be reminded that the student needs clear expectations about where she should be and when. They should also be reminded that they are responsible for feeding her dinner (see above). The host family should be reminded that Alexandra is encouraged to have a social life, and that it is ok to expect her to come home and spend time with them after school, but she will also need to find time to spend with her friends and time for extra-curricular/recreational activities. Alexandra should be reminded that her host family hosted because they want to spend time with her and get to know her, and she needs to prioritize spending time with them as much as she prioritizes her social life.

It may be helpful to remind each side of the above mentioned items first and then encourage them to have a conversation about mealtimes and schedules.

SOLUTIONS FOR SCENARIO # 4 - GRETA FROM GERMANY

1. What are the issues?

Relationship/boundaries with host siblings:

Greta's host siblings should not be barging into her room without being invited. On the other hand, if she is spending too much time in her bedroom by herself, that needs to be discussed. There needs to be a conversation about the expectations re: Greta's relationship with her host siblings.

Rural placement:

It is important to establish early on how often the host family wants to drive Greta into town. The host family is responsible to provide transportation to social and recreational activities, within reason.

2. Identify which of these might be adolescent issues, cultural differences, or adjustment to a different culture, and which have guidelines from YFU.

Adolescent Issues:

Greta's strained relationship with her host siblings could be an adolescent issue. Teenagers typically prefer to spend time with their friends as opposed to spending time with younger siblings.

Cultural differences:

Greta's expectations re: how often she can hang out with her friends could be a cultural difference. It is likely that in Germany, she has more autonomy and freedom in this regard.

3. Identify some of the alternatives for resolving the situation:

Both of these issues will need to be discussed. The AR could either speak to the host family separately, and Greta separately, and then direct them to talk to each other; or bring everyone together to talk.

Greta should be reminded that she needs to be kind to her host siblings and treat them with respect. She should apologize to the host sibling that she made cry. There should be mutually agreed upon rules re: the siblings and Greta's bedroom (for example, they need to knock and wait for her to say "come in" before coming in) and there should be a conversation about how much time she is spending in her bedroom.

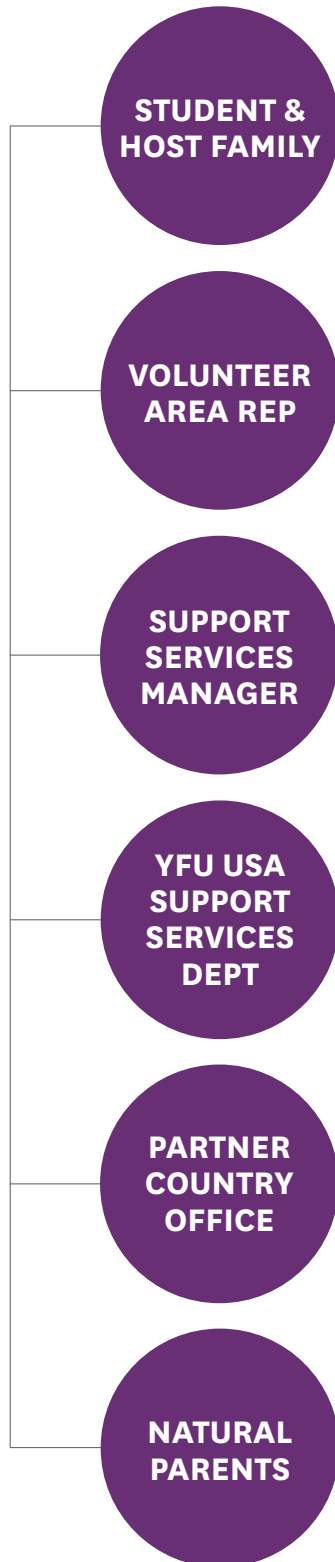
Greta should be reminded that the host siblings look up to her and love her like an older sister. It may help to schedule "sibling time" once a week where they all play a game together or something.

The host family and Greta will also need to agree upon transportation. How often would Greta like to go to town? Can she get a ride from someone else sometimes? Can she invite her friends over to the host family's home sometimes? The host family does need to provide transportation to social and recreational activities, but there is a balance. The host family and Greta may need the AR's help to agree on this, and they may both need to compromise a little.

APPENDIX 4: HOST FAMILY RESOURCES

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

When students and host families require support, contacting those who are best equipped to help allows the YFU support structure to work most effectively.



Volunteer Area Representative (Area Rep)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Some areas also have a volunteer area coordinator who supports the area representatives.

Support Services Manager (SSM)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Emergency Support: 800.424.3691

Non-Support Matters

Your YFU office provides help related to orientations, activities, and other non-support topics.

Saginaw, MI Office: 1.866.493.8872

HOW DO YOU DO THINGS IN YOUR HOME

The following questions will help you consider some of your family's most basic habits. Each family is different from every other, and that is particularly true when you compare your family to one from another country. The more you can communicate your habits to your new family member, the smoother your adjustment period will be. Be careful though not to overwhelm your new student with a list of "rules and regulations." Rather, use the questions below to identify some of your family's patterns and take the natural opportunities you will have with your student to share them.

Food

- When does your family eat meals? Is everyone expected to be there? Do you eat breakfast and lunch on your own or with the family?
- Is snacking allowed? What types of food can you snack on (candy, fruit, leftovers, etc.)?
- Can you eat in the living room, bedroom, etc.?
- Is it important that your exchange student uses American table manners?
- Is it important that everyone eat basically the same thing (same menu) at the table?
- What appliances do you use in your home? Your student may not be familiar with American appliances.
- What's for lunch on a school day? Host families will provide 3 meals a day. Clearly define what the family will pay for or at school and/or if food will be available at home for your student to bring lunch.

Dishes

- Who does the dishes, (or loads and unloads the dishwasher)?
- Are dirty dishes washed immediately, or is it acceptable to leave them in the sink or on the counter until a later time?
- What soap is used for dishes, in the dishwasher, etc.? You may need to explain that only dishwasher soap is used in the dishwasher.

Telephone

- Are there specific hours of use? For example, no calls after 9:00 PM.
- Are there limits on the duration of telephone calls?
- Who pays for long distance calls? Exchange students are responsible for their long distance charges. Explain the costs before your student makes a \$50 phone call to tell the natural parents s/he has arrived!

- Does your student need a cell phone? Help him/her find a stand-alone plan (not part of your family plan).
- Note: Answering machines and telephones differ from country to country. Make sure to explain the use of your answering machine, and telephone features like call waiting.

Pets

- Is your dog, cat, or other pet allowed inside or outside?
- Do you allow your pet(s) on the furniture or bed?
- Who feeds and cares for your pet(s)?
- May your pet eat the table scraps? May they eat from regular dinner plates?

TV, Music, etc.

- What is the tolerated noise level?
- Who decides which TV channel to watch? Can you change the channel if someone falls asleep or leaves the room, etc.?
- Is there a specific time you want the TV or music turned off?
- Is the TV only allowed on weekends or after homework is completed?
- Do you have rules for playing video games, watching DVDs, playing the Wii or using headphones/iPods?

Internet and Email

- What are your rules about computer/internet use? May your student use the family computer?
- If your student has a laptop, where should it be used and left when not in use?
- Does your family have limits on the use of e-mail or social networking? See YFU Policies in the Host Family Handbook.
- Is there an electronic curfew? (A time for ALL electronics to be charging in a public room for the night)

- If using your family computer - can computer programs be added/deleted? Are computer games permitted? May a student's friends use the family computer?
- Are there printer supplies (paper, ink, etc) that your student is expected to furnish?

Bathroom

- Who uses which one(s)?
- What is the most convenient time to use the bathroom for showering/ bathing and how much time is allowed?
- How long is too long?
- Do you expect everyone to shower everyday?
- Should the toilet seat and cover be up or down?
- Where should wet towels be put? How often are they washed?
- Should the door to the bathroom be open or closed when not in use?
- Exchange Students should buy their own personal hygiene products, such as deodorant, etc.

Laundry

- Where should dirty laundry be left - in a hamper, bathroom, bedroom floor, etc.?
- Does everyone do their own laundry, or does one person take responsibility?
- How often are sheets changed and who is responsible for changing them?

Bedroom

- Should the door be left closed or open?
- Do you knock before entering bedrooms or just open the door?
- Does the bed have to be made every day, never, or just on special occasions?
- Is it acceptable for your student to pile his or her clothes on the bed, chair, or floor? Should clothes be put away at all times?
- Who is responsible for cleaning the bedroom(s)?
- Is your student allowed to hang things on the wall with tacks, tape, or other materials?
- If your student is sharing a bedroom, how can each individual adapt to each other smoothly?

- What are the concerns about lights, music, keeping windows open or closed, etc? When do you get up and go to bed? How will each of you study and where?
- What are the rules surrounding friends (of both sexes) in the bedroom?

Odds and Ends

- Who uses the living room and for what purpose?
- Can you put your feet on the furniture?
- Are shoes to be worn in the house or taken off?
- Are lights to be turned off when leaving a room or left on?
- Are doors and windows to be kept shut, open, locked, or unlocked?
- Do you have curfew? What are the "house" rules? What are the consequences of breaking them?
- Are there assigned household chores, weekly, daily, rotating, etc.?
- Who brings in the mail and pays for stamps? Show your student how to address an envelope and where to place the stamp.
- Does the family attend a place of worship together? Every week or only on certain occasions? Should your student wear his or her best clothes to the place of worship?
- Are there designated "family times" daily or weekly? Explain when family members are encouraged to be together in common areas to play games, watch TV, etc.
- Is there a central family calendar?
- When are the family birthdays? What is your family's culture around celebrating and gift giving?
- What should your student call you - Mom, Dad or by first name?
- What transportation is available - school bus, public bus, bicycle? Is it safe to walk around the area alone?
- What are the unwritten family rules? Think of iceberg and those rules below the water.

APPENDIX 5: STEPS FOR FINDING NEW FAMILIES AND/ OR REPLACEMENT FAMILIES

There are several steps to securing a host family. YFU uses the acronym B.E.S.T. to help guide volunteers when they are working with the FD to find host families.

- B - Build** a relationship with the family
- E - Educate** the family about hosting and YFU
- S - Start** the host family application
- T - Talk** with the host family (Host Family Interview)

B - BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FAMILY & E - EDUCATE THE FAMILY ABOUT HOSTING AND YFU

ARs can share their YFU experiences with colleagues, friends, and neighbors, and use their networks (social, religious, school, work, etc) to consider families who might be interested in hosting. YFU has found that many families who host for the first time become associated with YFU because someone in their network was hosting. Building a relationship with potential families is an important first step in the hosting process.

When talking about hosting, be honest and sincere about the challenges and the rewards of hosting. Review basic information about YFU, including the rich history that begins after World War II (see the text box). Talk about the importance of cross-cultural learning and the benefits for families of welcoming an exchange student into their home. Don't forget to share information about YFU support to families, including the AR volunteer, the YFU staff (SSM & FD), and the orientation programs.

S - START THE HOST FAMILY APPLICATION

Once the host family decides to welcome a student into the home, the next step to becoming a host family is to complete the host family application. The AR can provide assistance to the family to navigate the application and complete all the different components.

Completing the application takes about 45 minutes to an hour and there are six steps involved. Once the application is completed, there are prompts that will guide the family through the remainder of the process, including providing information for a criminal background check, reading and signing the host family agreement and uploading photos to their account. The AR and the FD then communicate with one another to view the completed application and determine the interview date and time.

T - TALK WITH THE HOST FAMILY (HOST FAMILY INTERVIEW)

Before the interview, learn more about the family. Prior to visiting the home to talk with (or interview) the host family, download the report that will be completed following the interview. This report has questions that will need to be completed based on the interview. Become familiar with all the questions. Make note of the State Department requirements, including the touring the home. Questions on the form ask about running water, privacy for the student, and other details about the living environment.

On the day of the interview, remember that interviews go both ways and that YFU is being evaluated, too. As you talk with the family, be sure to share a realistic picture of the hosting experience, both the positives and the potential challenges.

YFU's History

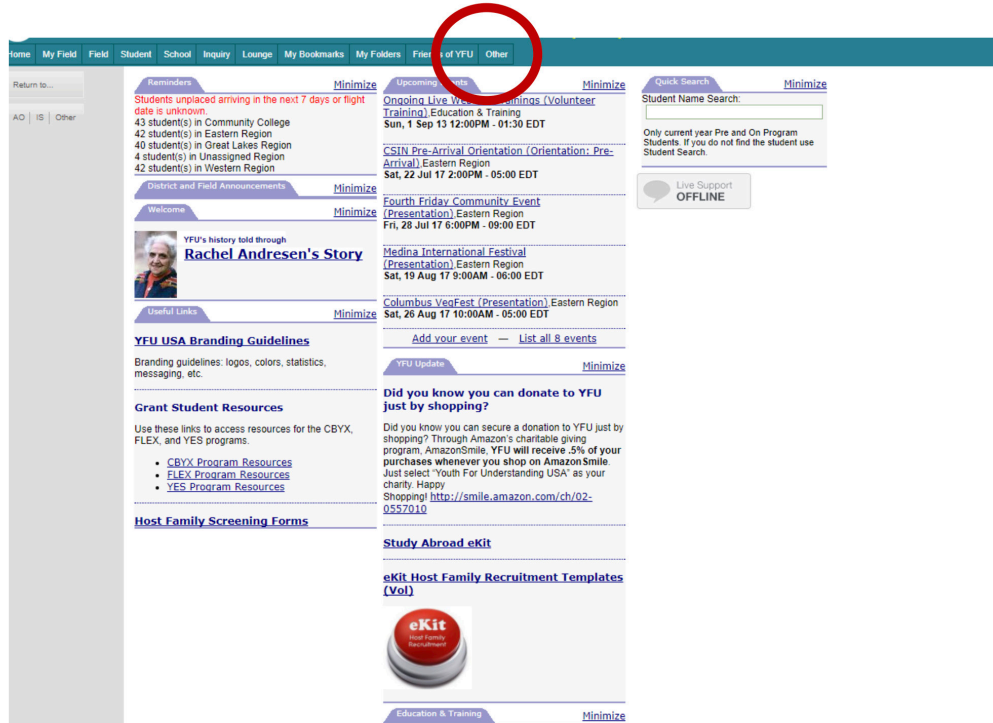
YFU's history began in the United States in 1951 in an effort to heal the wounds of World War II. Understanding that the hardships prevalent in Germany after World War II were having devastating effects on the country's youth, placing them in a cycle of bitterness, hopelessness, and despair, American minister John Eberly made a proposal to church leaders. He asked to bring teenagers from war-torn Germany to the United States to live with a family and attend high school for a year. By teaching a group of young people how families lived together in the United States, the hope was that they would be motivated to go back to Germany and rebuild the country as a democracy, according to what they had observed while living in the United States. Dr. Rachel Andresen, Executive Director of the Ann Arbor/Washtenaw Council of Churches, was asked to lend her assistance and help place these first students in American homes on a voluntary basis. In 1952, the Council of Churches received permission to act as the official agency for the program, which they named "Youth For Understanding." Family and community living were at the center of the YFU international learning experience. Dr. Andresen served as the YFU Executive Director until she retired in 1973 and her work in the field of youth and international exchange earned her a Noble Peace Prize nomination in 1973.

When speaking about challenges be sure to include information about the support that YFU provides through the AR, the SSMs, the FD and the orientation programs. The interview is also a good time to remind the family about the Host Family Agreement and the responsibilities of hosting. The conversation and tour of the home will take at least 90 minutes and remember during the interview, **all family members living in the home must be present.**

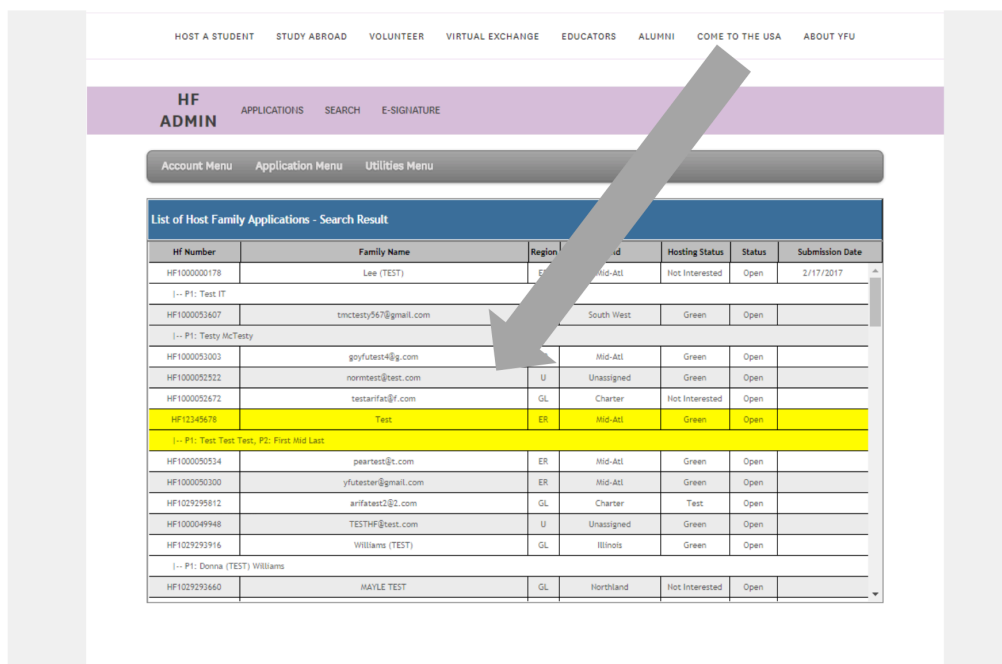
Following the interview, the AR will complete the interview report form (see appendix VI on how to access this form) about the interactions with the family. At the end of the form, there is a question about the AR's overall recommendation of the host family. The level of recommendation or lack of recommendation from the AR does NOT determine if the family will host. YFU looks at the entire application, including the interview report responses and makes this decision. There are three options that the volunteer chooses from at the end of the report: recommends the family, conditionally recommends or does not recommend the family. The conditional recommendation requires additional comments. In order to submit the report, the AR will need to know their electronic signature to save and submit the report. Be sure to let the FD know once this is completed.

APPENDIX 6: INSTRUCTIONS WITH SCREEN SHOTS TO ACCESS & SUBMIT HF INTERVIEW REPORT

Step 1: To log into the Host Family Interface go to my.yfu.org. Log in, and then under the “Other” tab (all the way to the right) select “Host Family Interface” from the drop down menu.



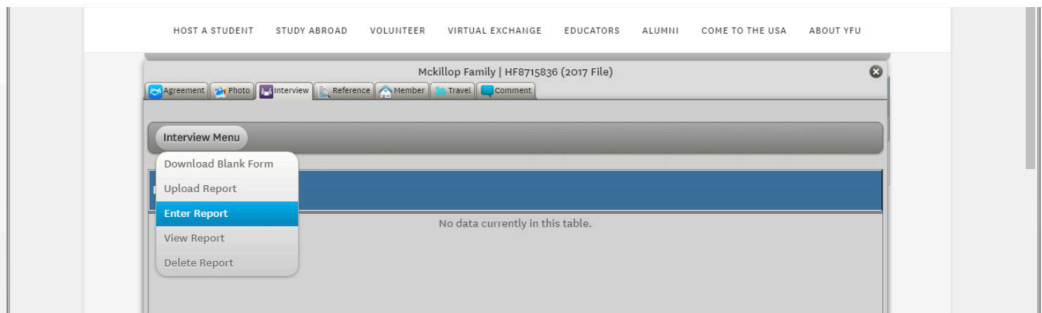
Step 2: In the Host Family Interface, search “HF Name” and their name will pop up. Click their name to highlight them yellow.



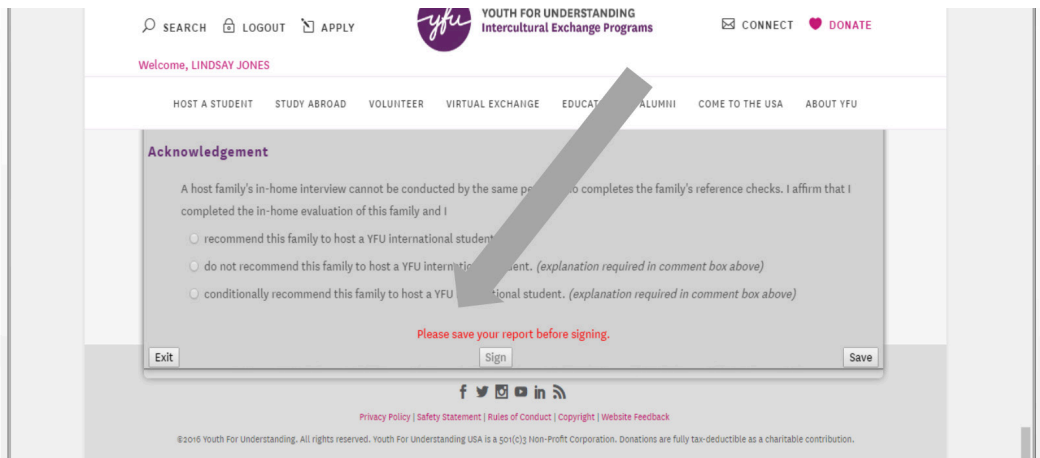
Step 3: Hover over “Account Menu” in the gray toolbar and can select “View Host Family”



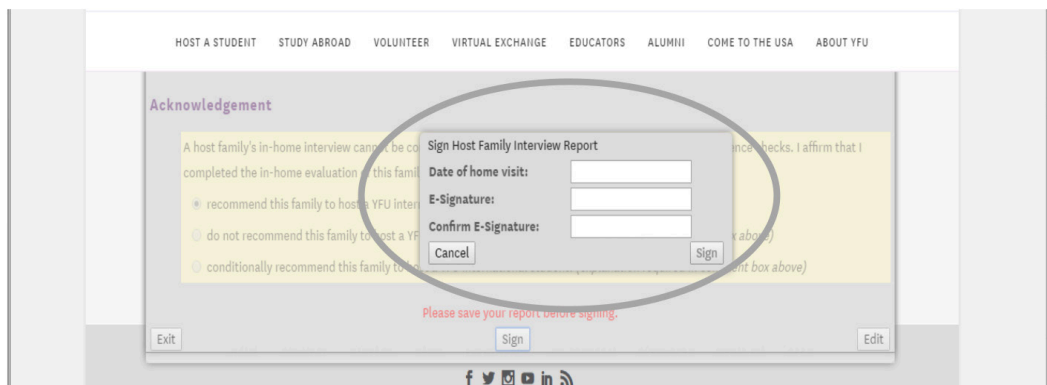
Step 4: Once the file is open, select the “Interview” tab. Then in the gray bar hover over “Interview Menu” and select “Enter Report”. Fill out the report, make sure you fill out every field. If a box is left blank that needs to be filled, the report will not submit.



Step 5: At the bottom be sure to “Save” before you “sign.”



Step 6: Sign the report. Date and Enter E-signature. The FD will automatically receive an email notifying them that the interview report has been submitted.



APPENDIX 7: VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING USA (YFU USA) AGREES TO PROVIDE:

- A Field Director and Volunteer Program Coordinator who are jointly responsible for a volunteer's onboarding, orientation, training, supervision, support, and when necessary, termination of agreement.
 - Regional and National Office staff to advise, assist, guide, and support volunteers during regularly scheduled work hours and available for after hours emergency support.
 - A written position description of the position agreed to by the volunteer, Field Director, and Volunteer Program Coordinator.
 - An orientation on YFU USA and its policies and procedures in addition to webinar trainings and in person training events, when the organization's budget allows.
 - Ongoing training and mentoring by field and Volunteer Programs staff in addition to experiences volunteers, as well as training available in online and self-study formats.
 - Access to the forms and tools necessary to perform assigned volunteer duties.
 - Reimbursement of authorized expenses (please see the YFU USA volunteer reimbursement and expense report policies).
 - Liability insurance coverage when operating within YFU USA policies and procedures.
-

AS A YFU USA VOLUNTEER, I AGREE TO:

- Accept the supervision and decisions of the Volunteer Programs staff, Field Director, and/or appointed delegates (i.e. staff members responsible for certain program areas).
- Participate in a new volunteer orientation and other required trainings associated with my volunteer position(s).
- Attend field/area meetings on a regular basis, where scheduled.
- Keep current on all new YFU USA trainings associated with my volunteer position(s).
- Be responsible for the functions, tasks, and established goals for the volunteer position.
- Comply with all government screening or certification requirements
- Maintain and support minimum standards/guidelines of YFU USA programs, including timely submissions of required written reports to meet government and industry regulatory standards.
- Exercise discretion and good judgment in matters of confidentiality concerning all program participants. I will not directly contact a student participant prior to being assigned as his-her representative.
- Advise YFU USA promptly if there are any changes in the information provided in my application, or if I will be unable to perform my volunteer duties under this agreement.
- Inform YFU USA of a charge, arrest, and/or conviction for anything other than minor parking/traffic violations.
- Follow practices, policies and procedures described in the *YFU USA Volunteer Handbook*.
- Maintain insurance on my personal automobile that will cover accidents if my personal automobile is used in fulfillment of my YFU USA volunteer duties.
- The possibility that my volunteer status can be terminated for reason including, but not limited to, failure to comply with the terms of this agreement, failure to pass a criminal background check or other circumstances that are contrary to the best interests of YFU USA, its students or host families.

I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING USA CODE OF CONDUCT:

- YFU USA is committed to the safety, welfare and well-being of all students participating in its programs. We support the rights of our students and will act without hesitation to promote a healthy, safe and secure environment at all times.
- YFU supports the rights and well-being of YFU host families, natural families, volunteers and staff and relies on their active participation in building and maintaining a healthy, safe and secure environment for all participants.
- YFU respects rights, dignity and worth of all individuals regardless of gender, ability, race, religion, age, physical differences or disabilities, national origin, marital status or sexual orientation.

Appropriate behavior includes but is not limited to:

- at all times conducting oneself in a manner consistent with one's role as a representative of YFU USA, including on social networking sites and at YFU events;
- following YFU USA policies and procedures for the safety of program participants;
- seeking help in order to avoid acting alone when responding to issues of potential risk to program participants, host families, volunteers or staff;
- treating all program participants, families, volunteers, and staff with equal dignity and respect;
- taking appropriate steps so that any allegation or suspicion of any type of abuse, including verbal, emotional, physical or sexual, is acted upon and communicated to the appropriate support staff;
- utilizing authority in a responsible and appropriate manner, abiding by program guidelines and regulations closely to avoid allegations of abuse and mistreatment of program participants;
- reporting promptly any decisions made regarding a participant that are outside normal program guidelines or which remove a student for more than 24 hours from the family or school to which the student has been assigned;
- maintaining sensitivity and understanding when dealing with issues pertaining to cultural differences and language deficiencies;
- filing reports using objective language which describe rather than label behaviors of participants;
- respecting the privacy of program participants, host families, volunteers and staff by using information appropriately and preventing the misuse of personal information.

While physical contact between volunteers and students can be appropriate in some settings, it should be limited and monitored. Appropriate physical contact between volunteers and students should be:

- done only with the student's permission: any signs of discomfort or resistance by the student, no matter how subtle, should be respected;
- in response to the need of the student and not the need of the adult;
- respectful and professional, avoiding breasts, buttocks, or groin;
- open and non-secretive.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to the realities of a program such as YFU USA, confidential information must often be shared to resolve difficulties or facilitate understanding. All YFU staff and volunteers, including professional counselors, should refrain from promises of confidentiality, advising participants of the limitations of confidentiality within our organization. However, all YFU participants have the right to expect that YFU USA will share confidential information only when necessary and conservatively.

INSURANCE

YFU volunteers are covered by the general liability insurance coverage that protects Youth For Understanding USA, Inc. This coverage is in force while volunteers are acting as the direction of YFU USA and within the scope of their duties for YFU USA. The coverage protects YFU USA and volunteers in matters involving bodily injury or property damage to third parties (i.e. persons other than YFU USA or the volunteer). The liability insurance does not extend to situations involving the use of owned or leased automobiles. Such coverage must be maintained by the volunteer under personal automobile insurance policies if a personal or leased automobile will be used in fulfillment of YFU USA volunteer duties.

TERMINATION

YFU USA recognizes volunteers as the primary deliverers of its programs in local communities. As such, they represent the organization to the public and also assume the responsibility for carrying out their duties in a safe and responsible manner consistent with the YFU USA mission and values. YFU USA has the discretion to terminate a volunteer in order to protect the safety of its participants and the integrity of the organization. Reasons for termination include by are not limited to:

- Willful violation of a YFU USA policy, CSIET standard or United States Department of State regulation;
 - Endangering the health or well-being of YFU USA participants;
 - Demonstrating a pattern of disrespect towards other members of the YFU USA community;
 - Engaging in inappropriate relationships or demonstrating inappropriate behavior which could be characterized as sexual harassment or abuse towards a YFU participant;
 - Failure to perform essential duties or responsibilities of one's volunteer position;
 - Discrimination because of gender, ability, race, religion, age, physical differences or disabilities, national original, marital status, or sexual orientation;
 - Theft, fraud, or other form of dishonesty including false statements on the Volunteer Application;
 - Accepting payment from organization for proprietary information gained through one's association with YFU USA;
or
 - Other forms of misconduct such as self-dealing or conflicts of interest that may adversely affect the reputation or integrity of YFU USA or YFU in general.
-

INSURANCE

I release Youth For Understanding USA, Inc. and its officers, members, directors, agents, and employees, from any liability whatsoever arising from, or relating to, any YFU USA programs, undertakings, activities, or events, or my participation therein.

I understand that my volunteer assignment is contingent upon agreeing to and abiding by the above provisions.



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING USA **Intercultural Exchange Programs**

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