



## **District Homestay Program**

### **Host Family**

Guidelines, Policies and Procedures





## Welcome to the Abbotsford District Homestay Program.

### International Program Staff Information

**Elizabeth Cho-Frede, Manager of International Programs**

Phone: 604-851-4585 / 604-852-2366 ext 1259

Emergencies only: 604-613-3813

Fax: 604-504-7629

Email: Elizabeth.chofrede@abbyschools.ca

**Rose Mann, Homestay Coordinator**

Phone: 604-851-4585 / 604-852-2366 ext 1266

Cell: 604-613-1265

Fax: 604 504-7629

Email: rose.mann@abbyschools.ca

**Program Assistants (Office)**

[International@abbyschools.ca](mailto:International@abbyschools.ca)

[International.finance@abbyschools.ca](mailto:International.finance@abbyschools.ca)

[International.medical@abbyschools.ca](mailto:International.medical@abbyschools.ca)

Phone: 604-851-4585

Fax: 604-504-7629

General Inquiries

Homestay Payment Inquiries

Medical Inquiries

**International Assistants:** Contact information for International Assistants will be provided at the beginning of each semester.

### Emergency Contact Information

**24-hour International Program Emergency number: 604-217-6647**

call **911** for Fire, Ambulance, or Police.

If a student or host family calls **911** or has a personal emergency that they need to speak to someone about, call **604-217-6647** as well to reach someone in the International Dept.

If a student is feeling unsafe, threatened, or is in serious doubt about a situation call the International Program emergency number. They will direct your call to the appropriate person.

If you have an emergency during our regular office hours: 8 – 4:30  
call Elizabeth Cho-Frede or Rose Mann



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Welcome to the Abbotsford School District Homestay Program. This booklet contains guidelines and expectations for making this international experience an enriching and enjoyable one, as well as answers to questions that are most commonly asked by host families or students. The homestay experience is the cornerstone of international education, allowing the student to have the adventure of living as a Canadian while the host family is exposed to and learns about another culture. This is an opportunity for families to share a cultural experience together. Parenting children from another family is a challenging and rewarding experience. It is natural and common for problems to arise. Please contact the Homestay Coordinator for support or guidance at any time.

### **Homestay Family Responsibilities (Contractual Obligations):**

Homestay families undergo a thorough screening process in order to be accepted into the International Program. All approved homestay families must comply with high standards, expectations, and guidelines. The following host family responsibilities are to ensure that international students are provided an experience with clear guidelines that families are willing and able to comply with that contribute to the best outcomes for students.

**It is mandatory for new families to attend homestay orientation prior to receiving their first student. It is also strongly recommended that all host families attend as well, even though they have had previous students. This evening is part of our training provided to all host families as topics change and policies and procedures are updated to provide opportunity for best outcomes for our students.**

### **Host parents are expected to:**

1. Complete the Homestay Application, in-home interview by the Homestay Coordinator, three references and a Site Inspection of the home. Each family must provide a Criminal Record Check (CRC) for each household member over 18 years of age. Criminal record checks must be renewed every three years. Families are required to pay for the criminal record checks. Long term guests and partners of single parents are also required to have criminal record checks.
2. Have the expectation and capability of spending enough effort and time with the student to ensure a successful experience.
3. Be able to communicate effectively in English and speak only English in the home. Students learn their English through immersion so English in the home is very important.
4. Be in good emotional and physical health.
5. Have a valid driver's license and access to a vehicle(s) that seats all family members including the student(s).

6. Involve the entire family in the decision to host an international student. Having a student in the home causes different family dynamics. Age and the personality of the student and of the host children may be difficult at times. Ensure this is the right time to be hosting.
7. Attend homestay information/orientation and training sessions as requested.
8. Provide a family profile. This will include information about the host family and pictures of the family, the home and the student's bedroom.
9. Meet all Site Inspection expectations and continue to for the duration of the student placement. The home should be clean and tidy. Provide the student with a clean, private bedroom which includes:
  - Minimum size room: 80 square feet.
  - A functioning window large enough for emergency escape.
  - Clean, comfortable bed (including linen, duvet cover, blanket, and two pillows).
  - Night table, dresser and lamp.
  - Work desk with chair and desk lamp with sufficient lighting
  - Closet or wardrobe and mirror
  - Provide a keyed or code lock on the student's bedroom door and a house key (code locks are preferred).
  - Inspect the student's room with the student weekly to ensure it is clean and tidy.
  - The room is for the student's use only; remove any items that are not the student's
10. Be clear about house rules and expectations and provide a list to the student for their reference. Host parents must enforce all house rules as explained to the student. Issues related to imposing consequences shall be logical and related to the broken rule. If unsure contact the Homestay Coordinator.
11. Orient the student to the home, Abbotsford and the neighbourhood. Remember, students are in a completely new environment and may need to be told many times about instructions and expectations.
12. Orient the student to household fire and earthquake safety procedures.
13. Continually provide the student with a safe and clean home environment.
14. Provide food for three wholesome meals each day and nutritious food for snacks. It is expected that the family and student will eat most meals together as a family. This is an important time for family members to get to know one another and spend time together. Set the example from the very beginning that you will be spending time together as a family, especially at meal times. Students should eat dinner with the host family at least 4 nights per week.



15. Provide access to bathroom, laundry and other shared facilities and instructions on use. You may have to use some Post-It notes for some instructions.
16. Enforce all house rules and program expectations as explained to the student. Be open and honest, tolerant and respectful in communicating with the student.
17. Complete written evaluations of student placement as requested.
18. Notify the Homestay Coordinator of any changes that may affect the student, such as: illness or a change in household members (i.e. children leaving, parents separating, long term guests staying).
19. Host one or two students as approved by the Homestay Coordinator or Program Manager. Do not house students or adults from a private arrangement or agency while hosting for the District Homestay Program.
20. When applicable the host family must provide 14 days written notice to the student and the International Education Program if ending a placement.
21. Ensure that all members of the household and house guests abide by program expectations.
22. Abide by all expectations outlined in the District Homestay Program guidelines, those presented by the Homestay Coordinator or the Program Manager either verbally or written and as outlined in this agreement.

**\*\*\* Students cannot be charged any extra money by anyone in the home over and above the homestay monthly fee. Any extra expenses must be approved by the Homestay Coordinator and/or the Program Manager. Please retain all receipts that may be relevant for reimbursement.**

**The International Education Program neither guarantees nor promises student occupancy to the host family. International student placement is based on a request and booking basis.**

**Abbotsford School District International Program does not assume any responsibility for any damages incurred by the student while in the host family's care.**

# Homestay Program Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

## Host Family Screening

After a host family has met all the screening criteria: Application, Family Interview, Reference checks, approved Criminal Record Searches, and Program Contract they will be placed on an availability list for students. The home must meet Site Inspection expectations and continue to do so for the duration of the homestay placement. If the family moves, it is the family's responsibility to notify the International Program and request a current Site Inspection. The family must also provide a family profile to the Homestay Coordinator that includes information about the host family and photos that will be sent to the student and their family.

## Criminal Record Check

A Criminal Record Search (CRC) must be completed for all persons living in the home over the age of 18. The CRC must be renewed every three years and the International Education Program reserves the right to request a current CRC at any time. **Any adult living in an Abbotsford District Homestay home that is charged with an offence must report that offence immediately to the International Program Manager or Homestay Coordinator.** Any criminal offences that are reported on the CRC or by any other means must be approved as per District Criminal Record Search Guidelines for Homestay Families. The cost of a CRC is incurred by the family. Any long-term adult guests or adults that are sharing in the care of a student, and/or partners or companions of single parents must also provide a CRC to the International office.

## Educational and Language Support

English must be the only language spoken in the home by all family members and with the student when the student is at home. Conversation is an important part of the student's learning process. The student needs the host family's help and encouragement. Host parents should spend a minimum of 15 minutes per day in one on one conversation with the student, remembering to speak slowly, simply and clearly. Host parents should ensure that the student is spending reasonable amounts of time doing homework and be available for parent/teacher communication at the student's school. Host parents cannot charge the student for tutoring. If a student reports that English is not the first language spoken in the home, the host family will not be permitted to continue hosting.

## Agents

Some students have an agent in their home country and some have an agent in Canada. An agent is a business person who works for a business or the home country parents directly. The agent oversees some of the responsibility for a student. The agent may also pay the host family the monthly payment. Local agents may take students for haircuts and shopping etc. Agents are not to interfere in the daily routines and expectations of the host family or the homestay program. Agents usually communicate directly with the International office if they have any inquiries about their student.

## School Fees

International students (in full year or half year school programs) DO **NOT** pay for:

- Student agendas
- Student course fees
- Locker rental fees
- Student activity fees
- Field trips that cost under \$30

International students in full year or half year school programs **do pay** for:

- Additional project material fees in courses such as woodwork, art, etc.
- Athletic fees (to participate on school teams as per school policies, including uniform rentals)
- Extra-curricular and optional field trips that cost more than \$30
- Yearbooks

## Textbooks

Classroom teachers loan textbooks to students. Some books can be kept for the duration of the course. Some books are loaned for a short time. The student is responsible for returning the book to the class teacher. If a textbook is not returned, or is lost or damaged, the student must pay for the textbook.

## International Assistants (IA)

(IAs) help international students integrate into the school community. They facilitate communication and language interpretation as needed between the student, the student's family, homestay parents, and the schools to encourage clear understanding of expectations, events and issues. They also assist students with program renewal documentation. Each IA is responsible for specific schools and students. Many of our IA's speak our student's language. The IA will meet the student at orientation and provide them with their contact information and work hours. IA's post their hours on the door of the International office at each school. The student can check the schedule and meet with their IA accordingly. If a particular IA is not available there is almost always an IA in the office that may be able to offer advice or some guidance. IA's do not work on the weekend or outside of their working hours.

IA's are school based and do not give permission to students for activities and social outings. The IA will direct the student to the host parent when applicable, for permission for activities and outings. If a student says to the host parent "my IA said I could..." in response to something that needs permission, the host parent should feel comfortable knowing that IA's do not intervene in homestay issues. The IA will listen to the student and sometimes provide feedback, and if the issue is significant the IA will contact the Homestay Coordinator or direct and encourage the student to have communication with the host parent.

## **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Host parents should be considerate of confidentiality when discussing students with family, friends and co-workers. Ask yourself; would my student want me talking about this?

## **Meals**

Host parents are expected to provide food for three wholesome meals per day and snacks. Breakfast foods should include opportunity for hot breakfast, not just cereal or toast. Host parents should teach their student how to cook eggs or breakfast sandwiches that have an egg and cheese etc. If the host parent is not preparing the lunch for the student, then the host parent should ensure there are enough food choices for the student to make their own lunch. Most teens do not make their own lunch so the student may need help to make a lunch they are taking to school. Also, most countries do not eat sandwiches so students may need something different. It is unreasonable to think that a person is going to change their eating habits just because they are in another country. They may want to take dinner left-overs from the night before, etc. Dinner should always be provided to the student. If the host parent is not going to be home for dinner for some reason, then there should be something preplanned that the student can warm up without much difficulty. The student should be permitted to do some cooking as long as they are competent in the kitchen and clean up after themselves, and it is at a reasonable time of day/night.

## **Communication and Reporting**

It is critical for host parents to understand the importance of reporting information to the program about their student. The program must be informed of anything notable that could impact a student such as potential legal issues, anything that could cause harm or affect a student's well-being, difficult or out of ordinary behaviour, problematic academic behaviour, and issues that are troubling beyond the realm of "normal". Host parents should also report if the student continually does not follow house or program rules. Children and teens who are not being parented by their biological parents are at greater risk of being exploited, taking part in inappropriate activities, and of being abused. It is imperative to communicate any concerns relating to a student to program staff. In most cases as their Custodian (immigration requirement to be in Canada) and as the program overseeing the student's safety and well-being, district staff must be involved in all important issues with students.

Students are informed repeatedly by the Program Manager and the Homestay Coordinator and the IA's not to take part in any illegal activity while they are in the program. Unfortunately, a few students every year, make the wrong choices. If a host parent is informed of any controversial, inappropriate or illegal activity by any student in the program it must be reported. Failure to report significant activity that could affect the well-being of the students will result in the host family not being permitted to continue hosting. Any discipline decisions about student behaviour are decided by the Program Manager and/or the Assistant Superintendent.

Prompt reporting of problems including not following house rules is essential. For students to understand what is expected of them they must receive constructive feedback and possible consequences from host parents in a timely manner. If they are not given any feedback they may continue a certain behaviour because they perceive it as it is ok.

Correspondence between the Homestay Coordinator and host families by email is essential. Host parents must notify the International Program if they change their email address and provide an email address that is checked often, as there could be important notices sent out regarding homestay or the students.

### **Asking for Help**

Host parents and students should feel comfortable getting in touch with the Homestay Coordinator regarding any problems that arise. Host parents are also advised to have contact with home country parents. We encourage host parents to network and keep in touch with other host parents of International Students.

Host parents must consider and realize that the student is an adolescent, and sometimes a very young one. He/she may be lonely, often disoriented with the new physical and social environment and may be struggling to learn a new language. The culture stress often produces a sense of insecurity. Be tolerant, honest, and courteous when communicating with your student.

### **When does student isolation require additional attention from district staff?**

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Extreme home sickness
- Negative view of new culture
- Not wanting to be around people different from themselves
- Sadness / Loneliness
- Anxiety / Frustration
- Trouble concentrating
- Don't care attitude with most aspects of daily living
- Unusual behaviours or behaviour not typical of your student

If a student is displaying any of these conditions, contact the Homestay Coordinator immediately. These concerns may also need to be discussed with the school counsellor. The IA's role in these cases is to ensure that host parents are put in contact with the Homestay Coordinator and possibly the School Counsellor.

### **Changing Host Families**

Changing homes is very difficult for youth. It is preferred that students do not move during their school term. Families and students are expected to make every effort to make the homestay a success. Host parents and/or students should contact the student's IA or the Homestay Coordinator right away if a student is experiencing difficulties. The Homestay Coordinator will try to help resolve the problem through clear communication between those involved. Everyone should try and be open and honest when discussing the problem. Disguising a problem to "save face" can create confusion and may not be the best way to deal with a problem. Often, what appears to be a problem may be based on cultural difference, communication problems or differing expectations and can be easily solved when discussed openly. If after meeting with the International Assistant and the Homestay Coordinator and a move is deemed necessary, a two-week (14 days) notice will be given to student and/or the host family. If the student is being moved because the host family has not met the program's contractual obligations the student may

be moved without paid notice to the host family. If a student is being removed from the homestay for the student's behaviour the host family will receive minimum two weeks' notice.

If a student requests a move from the District Homestay Program to a private arrangement the student will need to contact their IA.

The IA will contact the home country parents and/or the agent for permission and the student will give the current host family two weeks' notice. The IA will also ensure that the student is aware that the new private host family will assist the student with the move.

### **State of Accommodations:**

Homestay parents must ensure that the student treats their home and the property with care and respect. The host parents should have a weekly inspection of the bedroom and the bathroom if applicable, to ensure the room is tidy, clean, and without damage. They should also ensure the environment is free of garbage, dirty dishes, food etc. It is the host's decision if the student is permitted to eat snacks in the bedroom. If the host parent finds anything in the room that is damage or illegal, they should report it immediately to the homestay coordinator.

### **Damage Deposit:**

Homestay Damage Deposit is not collected by the Abbotsford School District. Homestay families must make every effort to ensure the student's bedroom and private/shared bathroom are always clean and tidy.

### **Arrival date of new students**

New students are taken to the new host family by the airport service, their local agent, or someone else the family has chosen. International office staff will call all the host families when the office receives the arrival information. Host families will be told the date of arrival and the approximate time that the student will arrive at the homestay. Students are discouraged to arrive more than 3 days prior to the student orientation date. That gives the student time to settle in and purchase school supplies, etc. Host parents should not make vacation plans that do not include their student during this time. This can be a very stressful time for many students, so respite should not be considered when they arrive.

### **Homestay Payment Process**

The homestay payment period is from the first to the last calendar day of each month.

Most home country parents now use the service to directly pay the host family by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). If the student's family has requested the "Homestay Payment Service" then the homestay payments would be given to the International Program at the beginning of the semester and the International office will disperse the funds each month, directly into the host family's bank account. The payments are processed to the host family, usually on the last Friday of each month. If that Friday is too close to the end of the month then the office may make a decision to pay the host families one week prior. Payments are always made in advance of the month owing. For example, at the end of August the host family receives payment for Sept.

If the student or agent is paying the homestay fee directly to the host parent, then the student should pay their homestay fee on the first of the month, by cheque or cash directly to the host

parents. If the homestay fee is paid in cash the host parent should provide a receipt and keep a copy.

If the host family is being paid from the office, we do not disperse homestay payments for the summer months, for students staying for summer school. Those payments must be made by the student to the host family. Our program "payment service" for direct payments is from arrival for Sept. semester to June 30th only.

### **Homestay Payment Fees**

July 1, 2017 the homestay fee is \$850.00 per month. (\$28.50 per night)

July 1, 2018 the homestay fee is \$900.00 per month. (\$30 per night)

#### **August arrival 2017 to June 30, 2018 only:**

To accommodate mid-month arrival and departure, a nightly rate of \$28.50 will be charged on a per night basis for the applicable portion of a month.

Homestay payment adjustment/refunds are given when the student does not require accommodations a portion of the month paid. The calculation is \$850 minus the number of nights in the home X \$28.50

For example: A student is leaving Abbotsford on June 15<sup>th</sup>: The homestay payment would be  $\$28.50 \times 14(\text{nights}) = \underline{\$399.00}$ .

During vacation breaks, if a student is going away for longer than 5 nights the student will pay half the nightly rate (\$14.25) for the nights they are away. The host parent would reimburse the student 16 nights x \$14.25 (\$228) from the \$850 monthly payment.

Starting August 2018: Homestay payments will be full month payments from Sept. to June. The only nightly payment/refund calculation will be during student orientation period and if a student is changing host families. The homestay coordinator will determine the payment/refund based on the reason for the move and if two weeks' notice is necessary. Host parents must be committed to hosting for the full months of the semester.

### **Host Family Vacation Planning/Travel While Hosting**

Host families should try and plan their family vacations for months when they are not hosting, especially for one semester placements. If a family is taking a vacation while hosting the following should be considered:

The Homestay Coordinator does not normally arrange respite for families during the school year. As parents making plans for your family, it is up to host parents to make those arrangements and considerations as we would for our own children.

It is very difficult for teens to go to respite. Many times they feel very displaced. Most families would never consider sending their own children to strangers when they take a vacation. Most parents taking a vacation without their children would usually arrange for a family member or

friend to take or supervise their children. That is why it is strongly recommend that if a family does need to be away that they first consider if the student can stay with a friend so that there is familiarity for the student, or having someone come in to their home so that the student can stay in familiar surroundings.

For emergency situations the Homestay Coordinator can be of assistance for alternate arrangements, but for the most part, please consider these respite suggestions and please consider how this may impact your student.

Also if host parents are going away and they do make alternate arrangements, they should forward the dates they are away and provide the name and contact information for who will be caring for their student to the Homestay Coordinator. The respite family should also be familiar with our program handbook and expectations, and the host parent should contact the student's home country parents as well about when they are going to be away and where their child will be.

If host parents are interested in providing respite for other families, they should let the Homestay Coordinator know and they will be added to a list of families that have an extra bedroom available.

### **Respite (alternate care for your student)**

Students are not permitted to stay overnight on their own. If the host parent(s) are going to be absent overnight, they must notify the Homestay Coordinator of their travel dates and the name and contact numbers for the respite caregiver. Host parent(s) must arrange for a responsible adult over the age of 25 years, to be present in the home to care for the student, or another approved host family can be used for respite. Please remember that **Respite** parents will make arrangements for pay with the **Current** host parents, and all program expectations are the same as if it was their student. All respite exchanges, transportation, and plans are between homestay parents. The respite caregivers receive the full per night homestay fee as they are providing all of the care required, and they are accommodating the needs of the original host family. Please ensure that the adult you are choosing for respite is responsible and trustworthy. Families that leave their student alone without respite will not be permitted to continue hosting.

### **Outings and Vacations (Student)**

Students come to Abbotsford for cultural and academic experiences. Host parents should enhance the student's experience with the occasional day trip to areas of interest. The homestay program expects that every family will minimally do one activity per month with their student. If the host family plans an overnight trip and would like the student to join them, the host family must contact the Homestay Coordinator and provide travel plans and dates. Permission from home country parents is needed and can be obtained through email and forwarded to the Homestay Coordinator. If the student accompanies the host family on holidays, outings or trips, the family pays for the accommodations and food. For entertainment, the student pays for his or her admission tickets and/or personal expenses. In some cases, the student will join the family on a vacation where the student will have to pay a flight cost, etc. This extra charge to the student must be approved by the Homestay Coordinator.



## **Sports teams and other organized activities**

We recommend that if a student wants to play a sport while they are here that they do it through their school. Some students sign up for dance, swimming, skating, and martial arts. The District Homestay Program will not expect a host family to provide support and transportation for community sport teams such as hockey, soccer or baseball. Students that enroll for these teams will be asked to find a privately arranged homestay that will meet their needs. Host parents should not encourage their student to enroll on a community team unless the host parent is willing to provide all the transportation and support and not be reimbursed for their time and travel.

## **Student Travel to the U.S.**

Not all students can travel to the U.S. Some students will have a passport/visa that will allow them entry to the U.S. and some can obtain a temporary visitor's Visa depending on the country they are from. Long term students can apply for a U.S. Visa after they arrive. The student can apply online and if accepted they will be required to see the U.S. consulate in Vancouver when they are given an appointment, which usually takes about 4-6 weeks.

If a student is going to the U.S. for any reason the student and/or host parents must have permission from the student's parents in an email with the dates and details of the trip. This applies for day trips as well. Families that cross the border often are encouraged to get a permission letter from home country parents for dates that cover a semester. Students are always covered by Guard.me medical while travelling in the U.S.

***If a student is considering a high-risk activity while in the U.S., the student and the host family must ensure that the activity is covered within the guard.me policy and/or MSP.***

## **Day travel (student)**

**Fraser Valley:** Many students have home country friends studying in the Fraser Valley, therefore students are permitted to day travel without adult supervision to Chilliwack, Langley, Surrey and Mission as long as the host parents have approved the travel and the student provides the names of the friends they are travelling with, the destination information, and have a working cell phone.

**Greater Vancouver Area:** Many of our students come from very large cities and are comfortable travelling around on their own. The age limit to day travel outside the Fraser Valley to the Greater Vancouver Area without an adult is 15. Students under age 15 must have an adult in reasonable proximity in case of emergency to travel outside of the Fraser Valley to the Vancouver area.

Students need permission from their host parents and host parents should confirm who their student is going with, what transportation plans they have made, when they will return, and what their safety plan is if needed. Students are **never given permission to stay overnight anywhere without approved adult supervision.**

**Travel (student) outside of the Greater Vancouver Area without an adult is not permitted.**

## **Sleepovers**

Host parents need to plan for sleepovers as they would for their own children. Host parents and the program need to know within reason where students are. If a student is requesting a sleepover it **must** be verified with the other parents and there must be an adult present overnight. Host parents should check the following:

- How much planning was done? Was this a last minute request?
- Who is going to be at the friend's house?
- Have you spoken to the parents living in the house where the sleepover is going to happen?
- Do you have all of the contact information?
- Have you met the parent/family before? If not, do you want to meet them before you approve your student sleeping over at their home?
- Is this sleepover plan something you would want for your own child?

## **Overnight outside of Abbotsford**

Students requesting an overnight outside of Abbotsford must have permission from their host parents and their home country parents. The student must provide the host parent(s) with the contact information and address of the family that will be accommodating the sleepover. If the host parent checks with the other family and decides to allow the student to have a sleepover, then the host family must also get email permission from home country parents that includes the details of the destination and the adults supervising. Because it can take some time for host parents to collect the information and contact home country parents, students should be encouraged to make plans well in advance, otherwise the sleepover may not be plausible.

**If a student is considered missing, that is their whereabouts are unknown and it has been an unreasonable amount of time since contact, or if the time away is out of character for that student, call the emergency cell phone number immediately. Try to remember and write down, when you last saw or heard from your student, what they were doing, who they were with and what they were wearing.**

## **Student Permission and Forms: Travel and High Risk form/email at the end of the handbook.**

Host parents can sign school permission forms for students for field trips and regular activities that are not considered high risk. This includes school items such as lockers and books, etc. School ski trips are pre-authorized by home country parents.

## **High Risk Activities and Permission**

Host parents must get permission, by email, from home country parents for anything that may be considered high risk. Students are not automatically granted permission to do something while they are here even if their home country parents or their host parents say it is "ok". Home country parents may not be aware of the risk and/or the policies of our program. Please check with the Homestay Coordinator if you have questions about permission. The International Program is the final authority when needed on any day or overnight travel outside the city of Abbotsford. A form will be provided that host parents can email to home country parents for permission and liability waiver.

Winter, mountain and some other activities that could be considered high-risk require written permission from home country parents. Permission can be obtained through email and forwarded to the Homestay Coordinator. Some of these activities include skiing, snowboarding, tubing, river rafting, kayaking, trampoline (personal and parks), ATV's, boating, rock climbing (outdoors), and travel outside of Greater Vancouver Area. Contact the Homestay Coordinator if you need any clarification or questions regarding activities. A form will be provided that host parents can email to home country parents for permission and liability waiver.

### **Healthy Time Management**

After school and weekend hours for students should be spent in healthy age appropriate activities. All teenagers need a certain amount of 'free time'. If students tend to gravitate to the mall and/or computers, homestay parents may have to set limits. We encourage students to participate in outings and activities with families and friends. Student socialization with their Canadian family and friends is of the utmost importance for optimum cultural integration and family bonding.

### **Homestay House Rules**

House rules are very important! If a host family's house rules are not written out students may be unclear what the expectations are. Host parents should have a discussion with their family about house rules before the student arrives and be clear about rules and expectations. A list should be provided to the student for their reference. All house rules should be enforced as explained to the student. Issues related to imposing consequences shall be age appropriate, logical, and related to the broken rule. List rules in a positive, clear manner. "Pick your battles," and host parents should decide what is important for their home and family members. If unsure contact the Homestay Coordinator. Not enforcing house rules or not imposing consequences is problematic for the student and for the program. Consistency is the key to success and students should all have some similar expectations in all the District Homestays. Host parents need to report ongoing problems with house rules in a timely manner. Host parents should report a problem in the month it incurs (minimally).

### **Curfew**

Host parents should decide before the student arrives what an age appropriate curfew is for their student. It is expected that the host parents will do their best to ensure that students are in by curfew. Of course there are exceptions for constructive activities, but if students are just out with friends it is important to expect them home by curfew. Although there will be some variance between families, curfews are generally similar. A good guide is time and grade for weekend curfew. For example, if a student is in grade 10 then their curfew should be 10pm. Host families with extreme curfews (too early or too late) may be contacted by the Homestay Coordinator for alternative considerations. Curfews are important for safety, they encourage and teach teenagers respect for rules and it shows that parents care about their teens and worry about them when they are not home.

### **T.V./ Cable**

If a host family subscribes to a provider that offers pay per view, ensure that parental controls are set on the PVR. Not only could students access inappropriate material (accidentally or

intentionally), but there could be movie rental charges. The program will not be responsible for charges incurred by the student if the host parents do not have parental controls set.

### **Medical Insurance Coverage**

All International Students in British Columbia must have Medical Insurance and it is provided through the International Program.

- **PHASE ONE:** All new students will be on **guard.me** private medical insurance for the first three months in Canada. If a student is only enrolled for one semester they will remain on the private insurance until they leave the program at the end of that semester.

The following clinic will accept guard.me coverage and bill guard.me directly.

**Abbotsford Village Medical Clinic**  
#302-2050 Sumas Way, Abbotsford  
Phone: 604-504-7145  
Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-8pm  
Saturday, Sunday and most holidays 9am-5pm

At the time of treatment, the student or the host parent may have to pay for the medical service. If applicable, keep the receipt that is provided at the time of the medical service. File a completed claim form online or mail the original receipts (keeping a photocopy for the student) **within 30 days** to: Claims inquiries: [claims@guard.me](mailto:claims@guard.me)

Each student will be provided a brochure explaining complete coverage when they receive their guard.me insurance and how to be reimbursed for costs.

**If a student requires medical attention at the hospital while on guard.me only, the adult person responsible for the student should provide the medical letter provided with the guard.me brochure or the one attached at the end of this booklet. The letter will explain to the hospital that our office will arrange payment. Host parents should keep a copy of this in their purse or car. Host parents should not offer to pay any hospital bills and give the letter to the inquiring person at the hospital for payment instructions.**

**Translation services are available through Guard.me for critical care and emergency medical situations.**

- **PHASE TWO:** The student will be on the Medical Services Plan of British Columbia (MSP) after 3 months in Canada. (Reminder: students who are enrolled for one semester only and leaving at the end of that semester will not switch over to MSP), the student will also have added covered by a guard.me “top up” this covers some extras above the MSP like prescriptions, emergency dental care, and travel insurance. The student will receive a brochure describing the benefit.

If a student is sick or has an accident, they only need to present their **BC Services Card** at the time of treatment.

The student will receive their **BC Services Card** from their International Assistant. The student should carry their BC Services Card in their wallet or purse at all times. There are no receipts – this medical plan pays the health care service directly.

\*Students travelling anywhere in Canada are fully covered under MSP. While travelling in the U.S. the student is covered by MSP with restrictions. Guard.me “top up” covers travel insurance to the U.S.

**Exclusions to guard.me medical coverage:**

- participation in professional sports or hazardous activities such as motorized contests of speed, parachuting, skydiving, hang gliding, bungee jumping, cave exploring, mountaineering, rock or cliff climbing, or scuba diving; and
- operating any type of aircraft or travelling as a passenger on any non-commercial flight; operating any form of motorized transport on land or water without a licence valid for the area where operating; travelling in or on a motorcycle, snowmobile, or any kind of vehicle while racing or off-road, unless no roads exist in the area in question;

There are exceptions and the following are allowable:

- Facilities that are on school property such as climbing walls and trampolines, and activities that are school sanctioned and supervised e.g. a canoe trip.
- Activities run by certified licenced tour operators i.e. white water rafting
- Activities such as skiing/snowboarding are fine provided students are going to a licenced mountain (no back country hiking or skiing) and that they adhere to the rules and regulations of the mountain. Wearing a helmet is not yet the law on the mountains but we strongly recommend it. There was a student death in another district that may well have been prevented if he had been wearing one.
- Mountain biking and all non-motorized biking is fine but in BC the law is that they must wear a helmet.

**Any medications, accidents, or serious illness must be reported to the Homestay Coordinator.** If a student is ill for an unreasonable period of time, or has unexplained pain or symptoms, the host parent should seek medical attention as soon as possible. If the host parent is working they should arrange for someone else to accommodate the student’s needs while they are sick and/or at a clinic, doctor’s office, or hospital. Host parents should note and possibly report any student who is taking questionable non-prescription medications.

## **Medication Policy**

The District Homestay Program has a medication policy. Students are usually not accepted if they are taking prescription medications. Students are asked on their application if they are taking any medications. If they answer “yes” then a decision is made by the program whether to accept the student. If a student does not disclose that they are taking medications and the host family discovers they are taking a prescribed medication after arrival, the International Program must be notified and the situation needs to be assessed. The medications and administering of them, may not be acceptable for our homestay program. If the student is accepted to stay in the District Homestay Program, a form must be completed by the home country parents and the student. All prescription medications must be kept in a safe place, by the host parent, and administered by an adult. Please consult with the Homestay Coordinator for further guidelines.

## **Computer and Internet**

Most students will have their own laptop or electronic device and require internet access. Internet access needs to be provided at no extra cost to the student.

Computer time is becoming an increasing problem with youth worldwide! Many parents find they need to limit and control the amount of time their children are on the internet. When possible the internet should be shut off at a reasonable time at night to avoid problems. International students use the internet as a way of communicating with their home country. Although this is a fun way to keep in touch, it can also become obsessive and problematic. Please call the Homestay Coordinator if you think the computer time is a problem. Letting a student spend excessive amounts of time online is discouraged. If phone and/or internet is a continuing problem, host parents should consider having their student put their device somewhere else in the home at a reasonable age appropriate time at night.

The program advises that host parents not permit their student to use a family computer. If a student does not arrive with a laptop, they should speak to their parents and arrange to purchase one. If the homestay permits the student to use a home computer, they do so at their own risk of computer repair and/or computer replacement.

Internet usage rates: Internet providers are now tracking and charging for streaming services because of Netflix and Movie and TV show watching on the internet. This is a fact of life for this generation. As a host family of a teen from another country it is more than probable that your student will be streaming some shows, therefore host parents must check with their internet provider and ensure they have purchased an internet plan that provides for streaming.

## **Cell phone**

All students in the District Homestay Program are required to have a cell phone with talk and text that does not require Wi-Fi. Almost all teenagers in Canada and other countries have cell phones. The host parents need to be able to contact their student if needed and the student needs to be able to let their host parents know where they are and what they are doing; and if they are going to be late or if they may have a problem or emergency while they are out in public.

Many students get an inexpensive pay-as-you-go phone for calling and texting. An average cost for a plan without data is approximately \$40 per month. Host parents cannot expect students to use data rather than Wi-Fi in their home.

Host families of long term students that help their student get a cell phone plan after they arrive, should contact the home country parents for approval of cost. A form is provided that host parents should email to home country parents **(at the end of the Handbook)**.

Similar to the internet, having a phone has advantages but it can also be problematic. Many parents have problems with the amount of time and how late the students are on the phone. If phone and/or internet is a continuing problem, host parents should consider having their student put their devices somewhere else in the home, at a reasonable age appropriate time at night.

If at any time the student's phone is not working and the host parents are not able to text or call the student, the host parent should report to the Homestay Coordinator immediately. Many students do not keep their phone working and that is a safety risk. It can also be a risk for many homes that no longer have a landline.

### **Bus (School Bus and City bus) and Familiarity with Abbotsford**

Host parents should show the student how to get to school and provide them with an orientation of the city. This may involve walking the student to school and bus stops and possibly riding the bus with them the first few times they use the system, depending on their age and maturity. Students can purchase city bus passes at their school office. The International Program does not provide city bus passes.

If the host family lives in a neighbourhood that is beyond the school district's walk limit and a school bus is provided, the International Program will cover the cost of the school bus. The host parent registers the student with the district Transportation Dept. just as they would for one of their own children. The Homestay Coordinator will provide the Transportation Dept. with a list of students who are exempt from payment. The Homestay Coordinator may approve a city bus pass for a student that has been placed out of their school catchment and/if a school bus may not be available.

### **Transportation (car rides)**

Students are encouraged to discuss their transportation needs with the host parents in advance. The student will also need to understand that it may not always be possible for the host to accommodate their request. Hosts are to provide, within reason, transportation to their student. Homestay parents do not charge their student for transportation within a 35 km radius of their home. Should there be transportation requests beyond this range the host could request payment for gas and parking expenses if required. The student can only be charged if the transportation in question is for the student only, and is not part of a family outing. For example: the host family is going to Vancouver and the student asks to be dropped off at Metrotown. The host family cannot charge the student for transportation.

### **Family Vehicle**

The host family's vehicle(s) must accommodate all the members of the family and the student(s) with a seat belt for each person for outings and sightseeing trips. It is highly recommended that the host family's third party liability be 3 million dollars minimum. It is a reasonable cost to purchase and something all people should have that are transporting non-biological children.

## **Visiting Parents and Family Members**

The Homestay Program provides housing for students only while they are attending school. Visiting parents and/or family members shall make arrangements to stay in a local hotel. Many host parents feel pressured or obligated to have the student's family stay with them if they are visiting Abbotsford. It is a very different and sometimes difficult dynamic to have parents/adults stay. Host parents can simply say that the program does not allow it. Please communicate with the Homestay Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

## **Household Chores**

The host parent(s) should assign household chores for which the student will be responsible. In Canada each member of the family assumes chores to maintain the cleanliness of the house. As a member of the family, it is important that the student participate in the household routines and chores. The chore should be something simple like setting the table or helping with dishes.

## **Paid Employment While in Canada**

Immigration Canada does not permit students to take a paying job in Canada while on Study Permit.

## **Babysitting**

Students are not permitted to babysit or be responsible for minor/younger children at any time.

## **Pets**

Students are not permitted to acquire any pets of their own.

## **Banking**

Host parent(s) should assist their student in opening a bank account if the student needs/wants one. Students should be encouraged to have a chequing account if they are paying the homestay payment to the host family and to use cheques to pay homestay payments. When opening the account, the student should use the name they have on their passport. Students should be discouraged from carrying large amounts of cash. Many students now use a bank card provided by their parents which the parents deposit money to.

## **Money and expenditures**

Students are expected to provide their own spending money to cover incidental expenses, such as personal items, school supplies, city bus passes, entertainment and admissions; however, when the family goes out to an occasional movie or to dinner at a restaurant, the student should not be asked to pay. The host needs to discuss these financial matters with their student shortly after arrival. Even though this may seem awkward, it prevents hard feelings later on if host parents are clear from the beginning.

## **Receipts**

Students cannot be charged anything over and above their homestay fee unless approved by the Homestay Coordinator or the Program Manager. This includes payments for possible damage, vacations, or food provided in the home. Check with the Homestay Coordinator if unsure. If a host parents thinks they may be eligible for reimbursement for something, ensure the receipts are kept for reference.



### **House Keys/Locks/Alarms**

The host is required to provide the student with a house key, code lock and alarm code if applicable. Host parents should instruct their student about locking and securing the house. It is highly recommended that one of the home's entry doors has a code lock. This can be changed at any time and host parents do not have to worry about lost or stolen house keys. If the home does not have a code lock the student is not responsible for payment if the house needs to be re-keyed.

### **Bedroom Door Lock**

The Homestay Program requires the student's bedroom door to have a keyed lock or a lock with a code. A student's privacy is very important so a working lock should be on the door prior to the student's arrival. This will ensure that they have privacy from little children and/or other teen siblings or their friends, and anyone else that may have access to their room.

### **Laundry**

If the student is doing his/her own laundry, the host must give clear instructions on how to use machines, size of loads, amount of detergent, separating colours, etc. You may want use a Post-It on the machines so your student knows each time what is required. Host parents should discuss with their student how laundry was done in the student's home country. Like bathrooms, laundry is different around the world and some students will want to continue laundering their clothes the way they did before.

### **Bathroom**

Students are given information in their Student Homestay Guidelines to make sure the student understands the differences between Canadian and Asian and South American bathrooms. In particular, that there is no floor drain, and that the shower curtain goes inside the tub or the shower doors are closed. If a student has their own bathroom then the student should clean their own bathroom. Some countries do not put toilet paper in the toilet because it does not break down properly in their system. They wrap it and put it in the trash can. That is why some families find large amounts of paper in the bathroom trash. If you notice this, explain to your student that we flush reasonable amounts of toilet paper away in the toilet.

### **Contact Information (Host Family)**

The host should provide the student with an ID wallet card that includes the host family name, address, home phone, and work numbers for both host parents, and an emergency contact person, such as a neighbour or relative. If they have a phone or electronic device, ensure this information is added. People do not remember phone numbers because they do not have to "dial" them anymore, so if your student loses his/her phone. Or it is off or broken, they will not know anyone's contact information.

### **Home Insurance Policy**

The host is expected to notify their homeowner insurance company that they have an additional person living in their house. They should ensure they have adequate liability insurance coverage. This is usually called, "Insurance for a Paying Boarder" and premiums vary with different companies. Also check to see if the student's personal belongings are covered by your insurance policy while he/she is residing in your home. If there is accidental damage caused by a student the

maximum charge to a student will be \$500 or the insurance deductible, whichever is the lesser amount. The family's home owner insurance or the family will have to cover amounts exceeding \$500. A report must be made to the Homestay Coordinator for accidents or damage that a family is requesting reimbursement for. The decision for reimbursement will be made by the International Program.

### **Insurance for Personal Belongings (Student)**

In most cases the host family Home Insurance policies do not cover a student for their personal belongings in the event they are lost, damaged, or stolen. The student guidelines will encourage students to contact his/her parents to ensure the necessary arrangements have been made to have the student's personal property insured while studying abroad if the student thinks this is necessary.

### **Learning to Drive**

Students in the International Program are not permitted to drive a motor vehicle even if they hold a valid British Columbia Driver's License, unless they are residing with one of their parents; therefore, no student in the District Homestay Program is permitted to drive a vehicle.

### **Students ending program in Abbotsford**

All students who are ending their program in Abbotsford must leave the District Homestay Program by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Students' medical, supervised homestay program, and District Custodianship end at midnight June 30<sup>th</sup>. If a student stays on in Canada past June 30<sup>th</sup> the Abbotsford School District is not responsible for the medical, care, finance, or supervision of the student. Students who are leaving in January, must leave the program by Jan. 31.

### **Preparing to leave Abbotsford**

Host parents should have their student pack most of his/her belongings and clean their room several days before the scheduled departure. Many students acquire a lot of clothing and items while they are in Abbotsford and they may need to purchase another luggage or they may have to discard some items. Leaving this too late can be very frustrating for host families.

If the student is returning to the same host family in Sept., then the host family should have a discussion with the student about what the student is leaving in Abbotsford. If a student wants to keep their belongings in their room with the understanding that no one else will use the student's room while the student is away, and the host family agrees, the student will pay \$500 for that time (departure until return date) This **amount must be paid in advance by the student before departure in June**. If the student takes all his/her belongings with them, no payment is required. Many host parents put their student's belongings in the garage or storage room at no cost.

### **Student Summer Break (July and August for students returning to Abbotsford in Sept.)**

The District Homestay Program provides homestay to students attending our academic school year, which runs from September – June. Homestay is not normally available to students during the summer months and the expectation is that students return to their home country during summer break. The only exception to this is if the student has made arrangements with the International Program **in advance** to attend Summer School. Due to host family holiday schedules,

it may not be possible for the student to remain in their current homestay and a temporary homestay may need to be arranged.

## **Airport Transportation**

### **When a student leaves or returns to Abbotsford**

- **Airport Transportation during the school year, for holidays, and breaks.**

Students often return to their home country for Christmas and Spring Break. The student and the host parents need to communicate about travel dates, well in advance, to ensure transportation needs to the airport are arranged.

If a host family drives the student to the airport and parks the car and helps the student to check in, then the host family can charge the student \$50 to cover the gas, time, and parking fee. If the host family is unavailable to transport the student, then the host family will help the student make an alternative arrangement and the cost will be incurred by the student. This may be a ride from a friend, a taxi, or airport service.

- **Airport Transportation at the end of a semester (for one semester students) or school year for others.**

When a student is leaving at the end of their program or school year it is expected that the host parents will take them to the airport and say their good-byes just as they would for their own child. **Host parents cannot charge the students for taking them to the airport at the end of the school year.** Although it is preferred that the host parents drive the student to the airport, this may not always be possible. We encourage students and home country parents to communicate with host parents about travel times that may be optimal but that is not always possible when flights are booked by agents in other countries. Please exhaust all possible transportation ideas before making alternative arrangements as most of us would not send our own child to the airport on a bus or in a van. **If the host parent must make alternative travel arrangements, the cost will be incurred by the host family.**

Airport Link Shuttle - Website: [www.airportlinkshuttle.com](http://www.airportlinkshuttle.com)

Phone: 1-604-594-3333

Language Limousine Services - Web: [www.languagelimousine.com](http://www.languagelimousine.com)

Phone: 604-988-7639

Email: [information@languagelimousine.com](mailto:information@languagelimousine.com)

- **Airport Transportation for Returning Students:** If a student is returning for another school year in September to the same host family, the student and the host parents need to communicate about return dates well in advance to ensure transportation needs from the airport are in place. It is the host family's responsibility to pick up the returning student at the airport. Only students new to a homestay are taken to the new family upon their arrival.

### **Closing out Student Bank Account**

If a student is leaving and not returning, then they will need to close their bank account. Host families should remind students and assist them if required.

### **Fun Activity Ideas**

**This is an excellent website for activities:**

<http://www.findfamilyfun.com/main.htm>

### **International Student & Homestay Family Fun Activity Ideas: Add your own!!**

#### **At Home:**

Movies	Cooking	Sports Board Games	Crafts
Arts	Sleep Over	Family Fun Nights	

#### **In the Community:**

Shopping	Movies	Restaurants	Sight-seeing
Berry Picking	Camping	Hiking/Cycling	Karaoke
Flea Markets	Garage Sales	Abbotsford Air Show	Birchwood Dairy
Libraries	Museums	Agrifair	Castle Fun Park
Volunteering			

#### **Other Areas to Explore:**

White Rock Beach	Fort Langley	Festivals	PNE
Harrison Lake	Cultus Lake		Water Slides
Granville Island	Victoria		Gulf Island Day
Whistler	Vancouver		Stanley Park
Science World/Vancouver Aquarium	New Westminster Quay		North Vancouver
Richmond Night Market	Capilano Suspension Bridge		

## **Student Travel Authorization Request**

### **Completed by the host parents:**

Student name:

Travel dates: From \_\_\_ to \_\_\_

Travel destination:

Contact information of the adult supervisor:

Name:

Contact phone number:

Address:

### **Completed by the home country parent or agent:**

I hereby give consent for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to travel without the supervision of the Abbotsford School District. I acknowledge that the Abbotsford School District or the supervisor for the travel shall not be held liable for any possible injury or accidents that may occur for the duration of the travel. I am aware that I am responsible for all expenses incurred on this trip.

If this trip is outside of Canada, the host parent shall ensure that the student has appropriate medical coverage as per the Abbotsford School District Homestay Program Guidelines.

Parent name:

Signature of parent or agent: By returning this email to the host parent with this portion completed, you are consenting to the information provided in this email.

Date:

Agent (if applicable):

**Cell Phone and Data Use Plan Permission**

Your son or daughter will need a cell phone while they are studying in Abbotsford. This letter is to inform you of the cost of your child’s phone and to inform you that you/your child is responsible for all costs and responsibility related to purchasing a cell phone and usage plan. The host family will help your child access the phone, but your child is responsible for discussing with you the options available and the cost associated with them. Phone and usage prices vary depending on the type of phone and the usage plan. The host family is not responsible for the choices your child makes. The student should budget appropriately for the monthly phone payment. The host parent will give a copy of the phone bill to the student each month and the student must pay the bill immediately.

**Completed by the host parents:**

Student name:

Duration of study in Abbotsford (months):

Cell phone plan and cost per month:

Cell phone cost:

End date of plan:

Date of notice to cell phone company (if applicable):

**Completed by the home country parent or agent:**

I agree that my child \_\_\_\_\_ can purchase a cell phone and/or a usage plan while they are studying in Abbotsford. As their parent I will be responsible for providing the monthly cost, and any added costs due to usage and/or lost or damaged phones, etc. If there are any outstanding amounts owing for the phone or the plan at the end of my child’s stay, I will pay those costs if my child has not.

Parent name:

Parent or agent signature: By returning this email to the host parent with this portion completed, you are consenting to the information provided in this email.

Date:

Agent (if applicable):

## **High Risk Activity Permission**

### **Completed by host parent:**

Student name:

Activity:

Date(s) of activity:

Activity location:

Equipment needed for activity: (example: Skiing – must wear a helmet.)

Person supervising: (if applicable)

Person providing transportation: (if applicable)

### **Completed by home country parent and/or agent:**

I waive any and all claims I may have against and release all liability of the Abbotsford School District and my child's host parents and anyone providing transportation, for any personal injury, death, property damage, or loss sustained as a result of my child's participation in this higher risk activity.

Accidents can be the result of the nature of the activity or the behaviour of the person taking part, and can occur with or without any fault on either the student or the facility where the activity is taking place. By allowing my son/daughter to participate in this activity, I am accepting the risk of an accident occurring and agree that this activity as described above, is suitable for my child.

Parent name:

Signature of parent or agent: By returning this email to the host parent with this portion completed, you are consenting to the information and activity described in this email.

Date:

Agent (if applicable):

**Letter: Hospital (Guard.Me Payments)**



## International Education Program

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Dear Hospital Employee:

This student is being brought to the hospital by a caregiver. The student is covered by Guard.Me private medical insurance as indicated on their insurance card. The District International Program handles all payments for any hospital service. Please invoice our office directly and we will arrange the payment.

*Mailing Address:*

**International Program**

Abbotsford School District #34

2790 Tims Street, Abbotsford, BC V2T 4M7

To facilitate prompt payment, the private medical insurance company requires the **"Emergency/Ambulatory Care Clinical Record"**, typically this record is the colour pink. When the hospital visit is over, please give the record to the student.

If you require further clarification, please contact me.

Yours truly,

Elizabeth Cho-Frede  
Manager of International Program  
Abbotsford School District  
Tel: 604.851.4585 / 604.852.2366 ext.1259  
Fax: 604.504.7629  
[Elizabeth\\_chofrede@sd34.bc.ca](mailto:Elizabeth_chofrede@sd34.bc.ca)  
<http://international.sd34.bc.ca/>



**Notes:**