This Homestay Handbook belongs to:
Complete this section with your Host Family’s address and your contact information.

Your Name: ______________________________________________________
Host Family’s Address: ____________________________________________
City/Town ____________________ Zip Code __________________________
Host’s Phone Number: _____________________________________________
You Phone Number: ______________________________________________
School: _________________________________________________________

Your Homestay Coordinator (HC):
Complete this section with your Homestay Coordinator’s contact information. If your HC is ever unreachable, you can find important contact information and phone numbers for the MIF Home Office located at the end of this Handbook.

Name: ___________________________________________________________________
Phone Number:____________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________________
WeChat/Other Contact: ________________________________

Emergency Contacts
Ask your Host Family for assistance with completing your local information.

Police, Medical and Fire – DIAL 911
Poison Control (800) 222-1222

Local Police Station_______________________________________________
Local Hospital____________________________________________________
Local Dentist______________________________________________________

All procedures/policies included in this handbook are subject to change/revision throughout the year.
For the most up to date listings, please go to My International Family’s website:

www.MyInternationalFamily.com
Dear MIF Homestay Program Participant:

Welcome to My International Family’s Homestay Program! Your homestay experience begins with the decision to spend time in another country surrounded by new people. As an international student you will have many interesting and educational experiences. It will be a time of growth as you are away from your family. It will also be an opportunity to extend your family as you become a member of your Host Family.

As you prepare for this adventure in your life you will probably experience many emotions and have several questions. MIF has prepared this Handbook to help you during your stay in the United States. It will provide you with information about what to expect in the United States as well as explain the rules and procedures of MIF’s Homestay Program. While you are in the United States, you will be expected to follow these rules and procedures.

It is important to read this entire Homestay Handbook carefully to make sure you understand all of it. You should keep this Handbook with you during your stay and refer to it when you have a question.

Your Homestay Coordinator is you primary point of contact while you are in your homestay. Call, text or email your Homestay Coordinator right away if you have any questions or concerns with your homestay so your Coordinator can help you.

We look forward to getting to know you during your time in the MIF Homestay Program!

Sincerely,
Will Mejia
Founder and Owner

www.myinternationalfamily.com
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What is an American homestay?

An American homestay is an opportunity for a student to live with a Host Family in order to be fully immersed in American culture and language. The MIF Homestay Program focuses on student and Host Family cooperation so that participants can learn and grow by living in an environment which may differ substantially from the one in which they grew up. By welcoming an international student into their home, host families have the opportunity to expand their worldview and build friendships that will last a lifetime.

During the homestay, students are treated like family members (not guests) and participate in family activities, household responsibilities and chores in order to truly join and feel a part of the family. Remember to be open-minded and flexible as you adjust to varied customs and experiences while accepting the responsibility of being part of a new family and an ambassador of your home country.

MIF promotes respect for cultural diversity, friendships between the United States and other countries, and a deepened awareness for shared human values and interests. One goal of the MIF Homestay Program is to help students understand, respect, and adjust to cultural differences; the difficulties encountered in this task are an essential part of the growth process. It is our belief that as more bridges are built between cultures, we promote global understanding, acceptance, peace and creating a better world for future generations.

What is an MIF Host Family?

MIF Host Families come in all sizes, races, and nationalities. The United States is made up of people from diverse ethnicities, religions, social and financial statuses, and family structures. Don’t expect your Host Family to be like what you see in the movies and on TV which does NOT reflect how American families actually are. America is a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures; there is not one type of American family.

MIF Host Families may be a single-parent household, a retired couple, a family with many children, or a single person. Consistent with its commitment to international understanding, MIF does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or gender in making selections and placements of students.

An Approved MIF Host Family is described below:

- All Host Family members over 18 years old will have successfully passed a background check
- The Host Family will have the room type you have booked (private or shared)
  - a. If a shared room is not available you will be upgraded without extra fee to a private room
- The Host Family will be able to provide the meals listed on your Contract
- The Host Family will be able to provide the transportation listed on your Contract or be within 60 minute ride time via public transit if your method of transportation is public transit.

All placement or replacements of students will be with a Host Family who meets the criteria of an Approved MIF Host Family. If your Host Family becomes unable to host you to the conclusion of your stay, MIF will arrange an alternate Approved Host Family for you for the remainder of your stay.
The Roll of Your Homestay Coordinator

Your Homestay Coordinator makes all the arrangements for your homestay before you arrive. They are available to you and your Host Family in order to monitor your homestay, answer questions, and help you overcome issues as they arise. The primary responsibility of the Homestay Coordinator is to support you and your Host so that you can have a successful homestay experience together. Ask your Host Family for your Homestay Coordinator’s contact information if you don’t have it.

Communication is very important!

Keep in touch with your Homestay Coordinator and parent/agent.

As your homestay provider, MIF and your Homestay Coordinator are responsible for your homestay care and services while you are in the United States. Any changes to your homestay services must go through your MIF Homestay Coordinator and your agent (if applicable). Remember, you are responsible to contact your Homestay Coordinator in the event of any problem or emergency as quickly as possible.

Always keep your contact information current with your Homestay Coordinator, Host Family, and agent (if applicable) so you are easily reachable by phone or email. If MIF staff contacts you, you should respond as soon as possible.
Your Homestay Contract

Your Homestay Contract shows what you or your parent/agent on your behalf has booked for you. This is what your Homestay Coordinator will always refer to when there are any problems with your homestay or Host Family. You are responsible for any additional costs incurred outside of your homestay program that are not otherwise outlined in your Homestay Contract (e.g. personal toiletries, holiday travel, airline tickets, entry fees, personal spending money, medical expenses, doctor’s appointments, medicine, food and snacks outside of contracted meals, etc.). ***Request a copy of your Homestay Contract from your Homestay Coordinator or agent if you are unclear of what has been booked by you or for you.

Homestay Start Date & End Date
Your Homestay Contract shows the start and end dates of your homestay. Once signed, your Homestay Contract and listed dates are considered finalized. Meaning, that similar to an apartment lease, you will not be entitled to a refund if you choose to be away from the homestay, or if you leave before your end date.

Contract Amendments
Any changes you wish to make to your booked services (like changing from private room to a shared room) will require a Contract Amendment that must be signed by you and agreed to by the host family. Please note that not all changes to services may be available or permitted, like canceling meals or adding transportation. MIF cannot take into consideration any complaints you have for problems which arise from changes to make to your booked services (like canceling meals with your host family directly) if proper channels are not followed with the HC involvement.

MIF Rules of Conduct
As a participant in the MIF Homestay Program you have agreed to comply with the MIF Rules of Conduct and acceptable behavior as outlined throughout this MIF Homestay Handbook. Your responsibilities to MIF, your Host Family, and your agent, if applicable, are outlined throughout this Handbook. The MIF Rules of Conduct can be found on pages 49 and 50.

Homestay Contract Extension or Renewal
If you wish to extend your current homestay or return to your Host Family for the following school year or semester, you must do so through MIF. Students are not permitted to make homestay arrangements or extensions with their Host Family directly but must make these arrangements through their MIF Homestay Coordinator. Your Homestay Coordinator will work with you to make a new Contract and check with your current Host Family to see if they can continue to host you. If your current Host Family cannot host you, we will find another Host Family for you. Once all this is arranged, you will need to sign a Homestay Contract extension.

Storage Arrangements for Your Belongings
MIF offers several storage options for students who do not have an active Contract but need to leave belongings or luggage behind until they return to the US. Contact your Homestay Coordinator to make these arrangements at least 4 weeks before you leave. Unless you have an active Contract and are paying homestay fees, you may not leave your room occupied with your belongings or with your host family.
Voluntary Withdraw from the MIF Homestay Program

If you leave your homestay suddenly without providing notice to your Homestay Coordinator or Host Family that you plan to return, this will be considered a voluntary withdraw from the MIF Homestay Program. Refusal to accept and move to a provided alternative Host Family in the event that a change in Host Families is necessary will also result in voluntary withdraw from the Homestay Program.

If you leave the Homestay suddenly, the Homestay Coordinator will make every effort to contact you prior to releasing the Host Family from their obligation to hold your room for you if your Homestay Contract is still active. If you do not reply, the Homestay Coordinator cannot reach you, you indicate you do not intend to return to continue the homestay, or you are absent from the homestay for five (5) consecutive days without notice of intent to return, this will be considered a voluntary withdraw from the homestay and the family will be released to offer the student’s room to another guest.

A student who voluntarily withdraws from the Program is still obligated to the Terms of the Homestay Contract including the Cancellation Policy and the payment of Homestay Fees. Always contact your Homestay Coordinator first before leaving the homestay to see what options can be extended to you.

MIF offers a Homestay Refund Plan which can alleviate the financial burden of your homestay fees if you have to withdraw suddenly. This Plan must be booked prior to the start date on your Contract and arrival to the US. See our website www.myinternationalfamily.com/homestay-refund-plan for more information.

Move-out Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move Out Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Points to remember:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Your room must be left in the same condition it was when you moved in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Any damages can be billed to you for payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Damage Deposit (if held) will be returned as outlined in the Handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Damage Deposit may be used towards cleaning fees if your room is left dirty, with trash, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Your house key must be returned before you leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Contact your Homestay Coordinator with any questions!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Checklist:**
Recommended tasks at least 3 days prior to departure:

☐ Complete final laundry - Wash and dry all clothes
☐ Pack and, if flying, weigh luggage – Donate or throw out any items that will not fit in your luggage for airlines limit
☐ Take all dishes/cups/mugs to the kitchen
☐ Take out trash. Dust, vacuum and tidy up your room.
☐ __________________________________________________________________________
☐ __________________________________________________________________________

**Day of departure**

☐ Return your house key to your host family
☐ All belongings must be packed and removed – no items can be left or they will be considered abandoned and will be discarded.*
☐ Check under bed, inside closets, drawers and other areas for missed items.
☐ Place used bed linens (sheets/pillowcases) and towels to designated areas – hamper, laundry room etc.
☐ Close and lock all bedroom windows
☐ __________________________________________________________________________

*If you are returning and storing things with your host family over your absence, you must have a Storage agreement with payment in place and on file with MIF in advance. Last minute storage requests cannot be accommodated.

Contact MIF Home Office or your Homestay Coordinator with any questions!
Preparing for Your Homestay

Making Your Homestay a Success

The success of your homestay experience depends largely on your attitude. It is important that you make a commitment to follow the Program rules and do the best you can to make your homestay successful. You can do this by adopting these four key qualities: a positive attitude, an open mind, realistic expectations and open communication.

Maintain a Positive Attitude

Make every effort to become involved with your Host Family, school and community. This will be your support system during your stay. The more family activities in which you engage the more you will learn about the United States and the American people. Your Host Family is excited about having you in their home and they want you to become a member of their family. Make the most of this opportunity by communicating with them and participating in family activities. By becoming involved with your Host Family, you will show them that you are excited about being in the United States and living with them. Bring this same attitude to your school and to the afterschool activities that your school provides. The more you participate in activities at school, the more quickly you will feel comfortable in the school and make friends.

Bring this same attitude to your school and to the afterschool activities that your school provides. The more you participate in activities at school, the more quickly you will feel comfortable in the school and make friends.

An Open Mind

Regardless of the country you call home, life in the United States will be very different for you. One of the reasons you decided to choose a homestay was probably that you wanted to experience something different and new. Sometimes you may find the differences challenging, irritating, or frustrating. It’s natural to have this reaction, but remember that you will only be in the United States for a short time, and if you spend the whole time feeling frustrated you will not enjoy your homestay experience. To make your time in the US a success, you should approach each situation with an open mind and a willingness to experience differences. Remember: “It’s not good. It’s not bad. It’s just different.” It is up to you to take advantage of this rare opportunity you have been given. Learn and grow from it!
Realistic Expectations

What you expect is not always what you find. One of the challenges you may face is the ability to adapt, adjust and correct your expectations. We frequently hear complaints from students who arrived with false expectations. They arrive thinking that the United States is one way only to find it to be very different than they expected and not at all like they are used to at home. One way to overcome disappointment with unrealized expectations is to look for the positive surprises of your homestay. Don’t waste your entire time wishing for your experience to be just as your had imagined it would be. You will learn and grow much more from your experience if you look for and appreciate the unique aspects of your time in the US.

You should know that Host families sometimes also have expectations they will have to adapt and adjust. Therefore it is important for you to realize that the first month or two of your homestay will be an adjustment period for both you and your Host Family. Approach each situation with patience and understanding.

Open Communication

You will read many times in this Handbook about the importance of communication. Communication with your Host Family, Homestay Coordinator, and parent or agent is what will make your homestay a success. Lack of communication allows small problems becoming large problems. The key to having a good relationship with your Host Family is communication!

Open and honest communication with your Host Family is the foundation of YOUR great homestay experience. Like you, your Host Family is excited about your arrival and they may be a little nervous, also. They will be making special efforts to make you feel a part of their family and you should also make special efforts to cooperate with them.

You will experience many new things: food, school, friends, language and culture, much of which you may not like or agree with... or it may become your new favorite. It will be overwhelming and sometimes frustrating trying to assimilate to life in a new country. Your Host Family is here to help you. Tell them what you are feeling and about any problems or issues you are having so they can help you. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your Host Family, you can talk to your Homestay Coordinator or agent instead.

Here are a few guidelines to help you communicate with your Host Family:

- **Be specific.** When your Host Family asks you a question, be truthful and say what you really feel or what you want. This is culturally expected in the US.

- **Tell them right away when you do not understand something they’ve said or shown you.** Your Host Family wants you to understand. If you do not understand, ask someone in your Host Family. At first, you may have to communicate by writing, gestures, or by using a dictionary or phone app. But don’t let that stop you from trying. Soon, you will be able to communicate more fluently.

- **Talk about problems respectfully.** If you have a problem you need help solving, or an issue begins to develop in your homestay, it is very important to talk about it with your Host Family. If you have tried but can’t solve it with your Host Family, or if you are uncomfortable speaking to your family about the problem, contact the Homestay Coordinator for additional assistance.

- **Speak up and share your interests and culture!** Talk about yourself and your home country. Americans are curious and want to know more about who you are. Do not be afraid of making mistakes with your English.

- **Say Please and Thank you!** In American it is expected that you say please and thank you for everything.

MIF wants both you and your Host Family to have a wonderful homestay experience. We work hard to ensure that you are well matched and happy with your family. Continue to practice your communication skills throughout your stay in the United States. It is normal for family members to occasionally experience conflicts.

When conflict arises, Americans value direct communication in order to resolve issues. Instead of withdrawing from the family member and the situation, communicate your feelings and ask that your family member do the same. If you ignore the problem, it sometimes grows into a bigger one. If you try to work through the conflict with the family member, you may find that your relationship becomes even stronger!
Preparing for your Arrival to the US

In this section, we'll highlight points you need to be aware of prior to your departure from your home country. In preparation of your departure, use the following list to prepare for your arrival to the US.

Suggested Items to Pack

Clothing: Remember to pack according to your destination and expected temperatures and season(s). Here are some ideas on what to bring:

1. Comfortable and seasonal clothing to wear on the weekends and outside of school hours.
2. Lightweight jacket or sweater and/or heavier coat, hat, gloves and scarf for winter if necessary.
3. Outfits for travel and sightseeing if you plan to travel during school breaks.
4. Pre-order your school uniform, shoes and any required gym clothes or sportswear.

Things to bring:

5. Personal spending money and an active credit/debit card
6. Electronics: Computer, cell phone, camera, alarm clock
7. Personal toiletries: shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, personal hygiene products, curling iron, hairdryer, contact lens solution, etc.
8. Small medical kit: Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, pain reliever. If you are bringing prescription medication(s), carry a doctor’s note with you showing you are authorized to have them so you don’t encounter issues while traveling.
9. Pictures of your family and activities you enjoy back home to show Host Family
10. School supplies: notebook, pens, dictionary, and a journal or diary to document your year abroad

Things to leave at home:

- Expensive jewelry, clothing and valuables
- Prescription medication you don’t have a prescription for
- Food not allowed on the airplane

Please note — most airlines limit baggage to one 50 lb. bag for check-in and one 20 lb. carry-on. Airlines are generally very strict about weight policies on overseas flights. Please check with your airline to verify weight allowances per bag.

Host Family Info

You will be provided with your Host Family’s address and contact information once your homestay is confirmed. Your Host Family contact information (telephone number, email, address, etc.) is confidential and has been provided to you for your personal use only. You should share this information with your immediate family to be used in case of an emergency. This contact information is not be used by anyone (relatives or friends) to call the Host Family repeatedly for reports on your homestay or school progress. If your family or parents have questions, they should call MIF or your Homestay Coordinator directly. K-12 academic year students’ parent/agent will be provided with monthly status reports.
**Airport Arrival and Host Family Pick-Up**

Whether or not you have booked airport transfer, it is important that you keep your HC updated with any changes to your original travel itinerary so they can update your Host Family.

If your flight time changes and you do not notify your HC in advance, your Host Family may unable to pick you up or you may be charged an additional fee for a second pick up if the Host Family has to go home from the airport after a long delay.

**Here are some helpful tips to ensure smoothly travel to and from your home country:**

1. Check your flight status prior to departure for any delays or cancellations and notify your HC immediately of any changes to your original itinerary.
2. Arrive to the airport with enough time to check in and clear security, and immigration and customs, where applicable.
3. Print out and carry your HC contact information with you.
4. Print out and carry your Host family’s contact information AND home address with you on the plane. You will need this to complete customs forms on international flights in order to clear customs.
5. Exchanging some of your home currency for US dollars if you haven’t already done so.

**Connecting flights**

If you miss a connecting flight – see the gate attendant right away. They can often rebook you on the next flight. Notify your HC of the changes to your connecting flight and arrival time right away.

**Host Family Pick-Up**

**Students arriving on International Flights:**

2. meet your Host Family as you exit Customs with your luggage.

Clearing immigration make take you 20-90 minutes. Your Host Family is told to allow extra time for this depending on airport size and congestion.

**Travel Tip:** most large airports have free Wi-Fi access. Look out for signs in the airport that advertise this or ask a gate attendant if this it available and how to connect.

**Students arriving on Domestic Flights:**

1. proceed directly to Baggage Claim
2. meet your Host Family **inside the airport at Baggage Claim**

**If you are unable to locate your Host Family right away in the designated area, DO NOT LEAVE THE AREA or the airport. Call your Host Family and then HC if you are unable to reach your Host Family.

**Obtain Health Insurance**

Students are responsible to purchase and maintain valid health insurance throughout their homestay. Carry proof of valid health insurance with you at all times and provide a copy of your ID card to your Host Family. MIF does not offer health insurance coverage, but your Homestay Coordinator can suggest several health insurance companies to you. See section: “Illness and Emergencies” on page 34 for more information on what to do if you feel sick or need medical attention.
Cell Phones and Electronics

You should plan to bring or purchase any personal electronic devices you will need such as cell phone or laptop. All students are encouraged to maintain an active cell phone and carry it with them at all times for safety reasons so they can be reached by their Host Family and Homestay Coordinator. Host Families cannot add a student to their family cell phone plan, but instead can assist the student with selecting a plan of their own independently of the Host Family. The Host Family is not expected or obligated to permit a student to use their personal phone or computer.

To acquire a US number you may arrive to the US with a working cell phone capable of being activated with a US phone carrier or purchase a “pre-paid” phone and call minutes after arriving.

Smartphones usually have a SIM card that is interchangeable from one country to another. You may be able to purchase a new SIM card once you arrive in the US that will work in your current phone. Most major phone carriers have no-contract monthly cell phone plans for about $40-60/month.

Spending Money

All students must arrive to the United States with some spending money and an active debit/credit card for personal expenses. It is your responsibility to keep track of your money. You should not depend on your Host Family for organizing your personal finances or cash safekeeping. Your Host Family is not permitted to pay for your personal items or school related expenses. You are not permitted to borrow money from your Host Family or lend money to them. This will avoid misunderstandings and ill feelings between you and your Host Family.

You are responsible for paying for certain expenses with your own spending money, for example:

- personal toiletry items such as shampoo, deodorant, cosmetics and clothing
- a cell phone, cell phone service or long-distance calling cards
- school related items such as lunches, uniforms, supplies, books, activity fees, etc.
- snacks
- activities with friends
- any transportation, meals, activities or excursions not booked on your Contract
- entrance fees, admission tickets, movie tickets, etc.

Determine what your weekly or monthly budget will be prior to your departure from your home country. Host families cannot take responsibility for your personal finances or cash safekeeping. Talk to your Homestay Coordinator or agent (if applicable) if you have questions about setting up a bank account or receiving additional spending money or funds from your home country throughout your stay.

Banking and ATMs

Soon after arriving, adult students should open a checking account.* This will keep your money in a safe place, help you keep track of it, and give you experience with the American banking system. You should ask an associate at the local bank of your choosing what identification and documentation is required for you to open an account. *Banking regulations do not allow for minor students to open a bank account on their own. Minor students will instead need to be accompanied by their natural parent or legal guardian in order to open their account.

Important note: MIF and your Host Family cannot open a bank account on your behalf or take responsibility for your personal finances and cash safekeeping for financial liability reasons. If you have any questions contact your Homestay Coordinator or agent (if applicable) for alternate options relating to opening a bank account or receiving money from your home country.

ATMs (Automated Teller Machines)

ATMs are located in banks and stores throughout the city and may be used to withdraw cash from your US bank account. Foreign issued debit and credit cards may also be used at compatible ATMs by matching the network symbol on the card to the network symbols on the ATM machine. You will need a PIN (personal id number) when using your debit or credit card at the ATM. Important
note: Your credit card company may treat ATM withdraws as a cash advance which may carry a high fee or percentage rate. Depending on the ATM you may be charged a fee so read all screen prompts carefully before proceeding with your withdraw.

Before leaving your home country: Call your bank or credit card company and let them know about your upcoming travel plans. Most banks and credit card companies keep track of spending patterns and may interpret an unexpected overseas purchase as credit card fraud. Your bank or credit card company could lock your account if you use your card in another country without notifying them.

School Orientation

Many universities and schools, especially K-12 schools, will hold Orientation day(s) for newly arriving students and in some cases for Host Families also. This will give you a chance to see the school, meet some of your teachers and become familiar with the school rules and policies as well as purchase required school books and/or supplies. Whenever possible, order any required school supplies such as uniforms in advance.

Parents or agents of K-12 students have the option of booking a K-12 Student Concierge Service (see below) through MIF that provides the student with dedicated assistance for school set up, orientation and orientation transportation.

K-12 Student Concierge Service (available for K-12 semester or academic year students only)

Parents or agents of K-12 students have the option of booking a K-12 Student Concierge Service through MIF that provides the student with dedicated assistance for school set up, orientation, and support throughout the school year for various emergency and additional non-contracted services. The K-12 Student Concierge Service is designed to provide students with dedicated assistance from their Host Family and Homestay Coordinator when they first arrive and throughout the school year.

K-12 Student Concierge Service includes*:
1. Two (2) Airport Transfers: initial arrival and final departure
2. School orientation attendance and transportation
K-12 Student Concierge Service includes*: (cont.)
3. School shopping: assistance with shopping for uniforms, shoes, school books and school supplies
4. Assistance with cell phone service set-up
5. Coordinating with the school faculty for completion of post-acceptance school forms required on student’s arrival such as: bussing, lunch forms, emergency contact form, medical information card, etc. (Does not include application or I-20 paperwork).
6. Medical appointments: scheduling and transportation for school required medical physical, dental check, any missing immunizations
7. Homestay Coordinator support with booking non-contracted services such as: emergency travel arrangements, tutoring services, transportation arrangements requested outside of contracted services

Additional fees apply for tolls, non-local airport transfers (over 15 mi distance from Homestay), New York airports and students booking Unaccompanied Minor Service Package with the airlines. Additional airport transfers may be booked separately. Students must pay for all personal purchases/expenses, medical costs and cell phone plan. Host families are not permitted to pay for Student purchases or loan the Student money. Fees for non-contracted services will be quoted at time of request.

Dedicated assistance for school related preparations often require the Host Family to take vacation days from work to assist the student with completing these tasks. If the K-12 Student Concierge Service is waived, students will be responsible to complete this on their own or with the assistance of their agent or natural parent. MIF reserves the right to collect the School K-12 Student Concierge Service fee retroactively in part or in full if these services have been waived but are provided by the Host Family so proper compensation can be issued to the family.

Talk to your Homestay Coordinator or agent, (if applicable) about booking the K-12 Student Concierge Service. K-12 Student Concierge Service must be waived on the Homestay Contract if not booked.
Passport, Visa and Important Documents

Keep your passport and important documents on your person at all times during your travels. Keep your visa current at all times. It is your responsibility to reside in the country on a valid and current visa throughout the duration of your homestay with MIF. You must be able to provide proof of your current visa status to MIF if ever requested to do so.

MIF advises against having your friend, teacher, Host Family, etc. hold these on your behalf. It is your responsibility to keep these safe and in your possession at all times.
Culture Shock & Adjustment

During your first couple of days, and even weeks you will experience a variety of emotions and reactions as you adjust to life in a new country, home and school. This is called Culture Shock. There are many stages of culture shock that you will experience during your stay in the United States. These feelings are a normal part of the overseas experience. You will most likely experience every stage; however, not all students go through them at the same time. You could even experience some of these stages out of order.

Read this section carefully and fully so that you will be prepared for the initial stages and will be able to quickly recognize when you need to ask your host family or homestay coordinator for help!

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**Stage 0: Preparation**
This stage occurs prior to your departure from your home country. During this period, you are preparing for your time abroad by attending orientations, purchasing items you will need during your homestay, packing your bags, and saying goodbye to family and friends.

**Stage 1: Honeymoon**
The first stage begins the day you arrive in the United States and typically lasts for few weeks. This is usually a very exciting time as you visit your school and meet your host family for the first time. You’ll likely be tired from the time change and jetlag so make sure to get plenty of sleep in order to stay healthy. A lot of your energy will be spent concentrating on what people are saying to you and how you should reply. This fatigue is normal for anyone who is not accustomed to an English only environment, regardless of how good their English skills are. Some side-effects of this overstimulation may be headaches from mental fatigue, or even physical fatigue and illness. All of this is normal. Your first few weeks in the U.S. may be hectic, but you will soon settle in as you adjust to the family and community.

**Stage 2: Settling In**
During this stage you start to feel more at home in your new environment. Your initial fatigue of travel passes and you’re becoming familiar with your host family’s patterns, your routine, schedule and new surroundings. Fitting in and making friends your own age is often the biggest challenge for international students. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or try new things. Building relationships takes time, so be patient.
Stage 3: Deepening your Relationships
After about a month of being in the United States, you’ll start feeling well established and confident in your surroundings. While the excitement of everything being new may be wearing off, you will notice a positive shift in having a set routine and schedule. Additionally, you’ll have become more accustomed to your host family rules which may be different from what you’re used to back home. Even if you don’t understand all of these rules, it’s necessary for you to adapt and follow them.

To further develop the friendships you’ve made, try sharing some new things about you, your culture and family. This will help to strengthen your various relationships, especially with your host family. Your host family will consider it a special treat if you offer to cook a traditional meal for them or share a special holiday tradition that your family observes at home.

Stage 4: Culture Shock
You may start to feel the effects of culture shock within the first couple of weeks of your stay. This stage is something you can experience, not once, but at various times of your stay. So what exactly is culture shock? Culture shock is defined as a sense of confusion and uncertainty coupled with feelings of anxiety that affects people exposed to another culture or environment. Everyone experiences culture shock in a different way but some common symptoms are:

- Homesickness/desire to leave the US
- A desire to spend time only with others of your own culture.
- Frustration or anger over minor things that are not very important.
- Blaming others for things that are not their fault (such as how you feel)
- Not wanting to learn English anymore
- Fear of trying new foods, activities, or not wanting to go to new places.
- Isolating yourself, not wanting to participate in family time
- Physical symptoms such as too much or too little sleep, stomachaches, headaches, or crying.

What can you do to avoid culture shock? Culture shock is normal and felt by anyone who travels outside of their home country. It cannot be avoided, but it’s not a constant in most cases. You may feel fine one day and miserable the next. Even a small thing like a scent or sound can trigger a memory of home. Even though you can’t avoid Culture Shock there are steps you can take to manage it successfully.

- Understand you WILL experience culture shock and that this is NORMAL.
- Accept a certain amount of confusion to be a normal part of your stay
- Don’t hold your feelings in or try to hide them. Talk to a member of your host family or your homestay coordinator.
- Do not blame yourself or others for the way you feel.
- Find a balance – don’t not expect too much of yourself – allow yourself time to acclimate.
- Stick to a good routine – this includes choosing healthy foods and getting enough sleep and exercise.
- Say “yes!” Accompany your host family on activities when they invite you. Do things you enjoy and try new things.
- Seek counseling or guidance if your symptoms become overwhelming.

Stage 5: The Holidays and School Breaks
If you stay in the US over the holidays you may feel like you’re “missing out” on family celebrations taking place in your home country. It is common to feel homesick and sad during this time and on other special occasions like your birthday, or the birthday of a friend or family members. If you travel home during school break, expect a period of readjustment upon your return to the US. However, as is the remedy in most cases, stay busy and stick to your routine. Get involved in your host family’s holiday activities and try out new cultural foods and traditions. The busier you keep yourself during these times, the easier they will be for you.
Stage 6: Cultural Learning
This stage begins about three months after arriving in the US. Your progress in English is well solidified and your understanding of the culture has expanded. You’ve gained new insight into yourself, your ideas, and about the people of the United States. You will probably have developed some good friends and are feeling at home with your host family.

At this point in your stay you may be surprised at how much you have changed since your arrival several months ago. What was very foreign at first is now becoming second nature. Foods you didn’t like previously may even be your new favorites now! Some students may feel conflicted at being so comfortable in their new country that you may experience a sense of guilt at “abandoning” your home country. This is not the case! You are simply expanding your worldview and becoming a global citizen. It is not a betrayal of your home country to like and enjoy things in your new country.

Look for further ways of sharing your home culture with your friends and host family here as well and sharing your new-found knowledge of the US with your friends and family back home.

Stage 7: Pre-Departure
About 6 weeks prior to your departure you may notice a shift in your mood as you prepared to leave your homestay and return to your home country. It can be an uncertain time for many students as they seek to balance the excitement of returning home and the sadness of leaving their new friends, host family and the US. It’s important you understand that these mixed feelings are normal. It may be tempting to withdraw from your host family and friends, but this will only make these last few weeks more difficult and lonely. Host families experience the mixed emotions of pre-departure also! Talk to your host family about how you are feeling and ask them to do the same. Look for fun ways to spend your final weeks together – make a scrapbook or plan a farewell party! You should also prepare for the adjustment you will experience when you return home.

Stage 8: Readjustment
This stage occurs after returning to your home country and as you settle back into your own culture and familiar surroundings. You’ll likely feel a little out of place at first and may even feel homesick for people, food, places or things that you’d gotten used to in the United States. Don’t worry! All of this is normal and an expected part of re-adjustment after being away for some time.

You’ll probably be excited to share stories about your time in the US with everyone. As you share these memories be mindful that your friends and family might feel like you now value your US experience more than being back in your home country with them. You can’t control how they will feel, but make sure to allow them equal time to share with you some things that happened while you were away. Be prepared for some feelings of sadness when you return home and see that, while you were away, your family and friends made new memories that you weren’t a part of and formed new friendships with people you don’t know.

It will take time for you to get reacquainted with everyone. Allow yourself to adjust to any changes that happened while you were away, but also for the changes that happened to you which gives you a new perspective on your home country and surroundings!
Home and Family Life

You’ve arrived! In this section we will discuss home and family life in your homestay. Many aspects of daily life in America will be new and different than your home and family routines in your home country. It is normal and expected that adjusting to a new language, culture and family environment will result in occasional moments of loneliness, confusion, and misunderstanding between you and your new family.

Your Host Family is responsible for providing a safe and clean place to live. If you feel, at any time, that any of your Host Family’s obligations are not being met, please contact your Homestay Coordinator. **It is your responsibility to contact your Homestay Coordinator or parent/agent if you ever have any questions, issues or problems immediately so we can work to resolve them right away.** If you don’t verbalize your feelings, we won’t know how to help you, so please speak up anytime!

Communication with MIF and your Host Family

Communication is very important. Keep in touch with your Homestay Coordinator and agent. Any changes to your Homestay Contract and homestay must go through the Homestay Coordinator and your agent, if you have one.

Let your Homestay Coordinator know if:

1. Your contact information changes (new cell phone number, email address, etc.)
2. You will arrive late to your homestay or after the start date on your Homestay Contract
3. You will go on vacation or be away from the Host Family’s home during your homestay
4. You have a question or concern about your homestay

Homestay tip: When is a group setting, refrain from using your native language in front of others and your host family because it’s impolite and isolates them from your conversations.

Shared Respect and Host Family Privacy

Your host family will respect and protect your privacy. A host family’s privacy should be respected in the same way you would want your own family’s privacy to be respected. This includes not sharing, complaining, gossiping, or posting on social media about your host family’s personal affairs and family life publicly in a way that could damage their reputations. Damaging a Host’s reputation with false or exaggerated claims can impact a Host Family long after you have returned home.

MIF’s top priority is the safety and wellbeing of its students, so all claims are taken seriously and will be promptly investigated. If claims against the Host Family or MIF employees are found to be false or exaggerated, the student will face disciplinary action in accordance with the MIF Disciplinary Policy found on page 43 and may incur financial penalties which may include, but are not limited to: investigation, legal or professional services fees, and/or travel and accommodation costs of MIF employee(s) to investigate the matter.

House Keys

All students will be provided with a key to the Host Family’s home. When providing you with a house key, your host family is entrusting you with the safety of their family and possessions by allowing you access to the home via this key. **You are responsible to ensure safe keeping of the key you have been given.** Never attach the host address to the key or key ring so that if you inadvertently lose it will not provide someone with ill intent an opportunity to rob your host family’s home. You cannot make duplicates of the key or share the key with others. Lost keys will result in a minimum $125 fee for replacement of the key and door lock(s). This amount will be billed to you (or the Signee on your Contract if you are a minor) for immediate payment. Irresponsible behavior and/or violation of house rules may result in rescinded key privileges. You are responsibly to return the key to your Host Family prior to your departure.
Host Family Rules

Students abide by the same rules as any other member of the family. It shows respect when you abide by your Host’s rules and guidelines. If your Host Family does not provide you with a list of rules, ask for a printed copy.

Basic Rules for all Host Families:
1. You are required to clean up after yourself and keep your room and areas you use clean.
   a. Because American families do not have maids, a chef or chauffeurs, every family member learns how to tidy up after themselves. Understanding this and learning how to clean up after yourself is key for a successful homestay.
2. You are not permitted to use the Host Family’s telephone or computer without their permission.
3. You are required to follow your family’s rules on internet and Wi-Fi usage, including any curfews they impose.
4. K-12 students must attend school every day it is in session unless excused by a doctor’s note if you are ill, or excused by your host parent.
5. If you need your Host Family to provide transportation for an after school activity, social activity, or errand you must ask them in advance so that you can coordinate your schedules. Remember that your Host Family is not obligated to drive you to events that are not outlined in your Contract.
6. Follow your family’s rules regarding water and bathroom time usage. Host Families in drought affected areas (like California) are required by the government to follow strict time limits on water usage and consumption. If your family has such rules, they will discuss them with you.

Open communication is critical to a successful homestay experience. Students should feel free to talk with their Host Families about any problems or concerns they have. While this may be uncomfortable at first, you will find that your Host Family appreciates such honesty and it helps to encourage better family relationships.

Failure to follow rules in this section and Host Family Rules could result in disciplinary action in accordance with MIF’s Three Strikes Policy (page 43).

Household Chores and Cleaning Up

During your stay, you will be treated like a member of your American host family, not a guest. As a member of the household, you are expected to participate in family activities including household responsibilities and chores. It is rare for American families to have maids or staff for the household cleaning or yard work so every family member is expected to clean up after themselves. You should complete any chores assigned to you without having to be reminded repeatedly. It is also a nice gesture on your part to offer to help even without being asked. Working together creates harmony and connects family members in the home.

Why is my Host Family’s house so cold? (AC/Heat Settings)

During the warmer months in America, most families keep their Air Conditioners (AC) turned on all day long. It is not unusual for the AC temperature to be set to 68°F or lower in most homes, stores, schools and restaurants. Be sure to carry light sweater with you during the summer months, just in case the AC is too cold for your comfort.

Additionally, because heating a home can be very costly, many families keep their heat turned as low as 65°F during the colder months. Central heat does not allow for only one room to be heated so plan to layer your clothing and wear socks in the winter to stay warm instead of turning up the heat. A bathrobe and slippers will also come in handy. While you can’t raise the heat, you can definitely add layers of clothing.

Your Bedroom

You will be provided with a single or shared room according to what you have booked as outlined in your Contract. Your room will include a bed, a space for your belongings, bedding, and many other items to help you feel comfortable in your new home. Your Host Family will provide you with a place to study, usually in your bedroom, but it could be outside of your bedroom also. You will need to keep your room clean by making your bed, regularly sweeping or vacuuming and removing the trash without being told.

Your room may or may not contain a desk due to the setup of the room or space restrictions of the home or bedroom. If your bedroom does not come with a desk and you want one, ask your host family if they have a desk or small table that can be moved into your room. If they don’t have one available, then you can purchase one at your own expense; but consider what you will do with it at the end of your stay.
**You are not permitted to eat or store food in your bedroom unless your Host Family gives you permission to do so. Keeping food in your room can draw pests and bugs.**

If something about your bedroom is uncomfortable, DON'T WAIT! Talk about additional needs with your Host Family.

**Example:** “The light in my room is not very good for reading. Is there another lamp I could use?”

**Example:** “The temperature in my room is colder than I am accustomed to. Could you give me an extra blanket?”

**Shower and Bathroom Use**

Talk to your Host Family about what time is best for you to take a shower or bath. Most American homes are equipped with a limited hot water supply tank. This tank takes a while to heat up water and may run out of hot water before all members of the family are finished showering. Be considerate of your Host Family members and limit your shower times accordingly.

**Bathroom Rules:**

1. Total bathroom occupancy time should be limited to 30 minutes per use.
2. Limit your water usage and shower to no more than 10-15 minutes.
3. Do not splash water outside of the shower or bathtub. Always wipe up any spilled water immediately. Never leave water on the floor.
   a. Ask your host parent what you should use to wipe up the water and where you should put it when you are done. Your Host Family will probably prefer you do not wipe up spills with fresh towels.
4. Always hang towels in the designated spot. Wet towels can ruin the finish on wood furniture, causing costly damage. Do not leave wet towels on the floor or on any furniture.
5. Wash your bath towel at least once a week along with your other clothes to prevent bad odor and smell.
6. All toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. Do not put used toilet paper in the trash can.
7. If there is urine or poop on the toilet seat after you use it, you are responsible to clean it up immediately.
8. Put the seat and lid down when you are finished using the toilet.

If you have a private bathroom, you will be solely responsible to clean it regularly. If you share a bathroom, you’ll be responsible to help clean it. Your Host Family will show you what cleaning supplies to use and how to use them. Since this may be your first time doing chores, your Host Family will be happy to show you how to complete each chore. If you forget how to complete the chore, ask your Host Family to show you again.

**Clogging the Toilet**

American sewer systems are designed for toilet paper and human waste only. Never put anything besides toilet paper (such as paper towels, sanitary napkins, etc) in the toilet because it may become clogged, overflow, and cause damage. The toilet may become clogged if you flush too much toilet paper at one time. **If the toilet becomes clogged, ask your Host right away where the toilet plunger is and how to use it.** You may feel embarrassed at first, but your Host Parent will understand and be able to help you. Continuing to flush the toilet after it is clogged will cause it to overflow and result in water damage. It is much better to ask your Host for help so they can show you how to fix it before causing any damage.

**Homestay Tip:** **Host Families in drought affected areas (like California) are required by the government to follow strict time limits on water usage and consumption. As a member of the family, you will be required to adhere to and abide by these rules. If your family has such rules, they will discuss them with you.**
Personal Hygiene

Bathing customs differ from culture to culture. While American bathing customs may seem excessive to some, Americans are accustomed to a certain level of hygiene and will notice if visitors do not observe them to a sufficient extent. In the United States, it is customary to shower, wash your hair and wear deodorant every day. In the same way that you need to keep your room clean and odor-free, you will be required to keep your appearance and person neat, clean and tidy. Don’t skip washing your hair or body unless you are sure that you smell clean.

**Personal Hygiene Rules:**

1. **Shower every day, without exception.** In warm weather, more than one shower is often necessary.
2. **Brush your teeth twice a day, without exception.**
3. **Wear deodorant every day, without exception.**
4. **Clean all your clothes on a regular basis, without exception.**
5. **You are required to maintain hygienic living and bathroom spaces, without exception.**

**Note:** Some family members may be allergic or very sensitive to scented lotions, soaps and perfumes or cologne. You may be asked to limit your use of scented products or discontinue use of them altogether if a family is allergic or sensitive.

Toiletries

Toiletries are personal hygiene items such as shampoo, toothpaste, soap, and any other items that you regularly use. You are responsible for purchasing your own toiletries. Your family will provide towels, blankets, sheets, and certain other non-toiletry items for you to use in the home. Ask your Host Family if you need help with selecting these items.

Laundry

Your Host Family will show you how to use the in-home washer and dryer and provide laundry soap and any other items you need. Each Host Family will have their own routine for washing clothes, so be sure to ask about your family’s laundry schedule. It is at the Host Family’s discretion to dictate who is responsible for washing your dirty clothes, however you are ultimately responsible for washing your own clothes weekly and should expect to perform this task yourself.

**Laundry Questions to ask Your Host Family:**

1. Where should I put my dirty clothes until it is time for them to be washed?
2. Will I be washing my own clothes? If so, how do the machines work?
3. If someone else washes the clothes, do I need to bring them to the laundry room at a certain day and time?
4. How can I help with the laundry chores?
5. How often should I change my bed linens?

**Off-site Laundry**

If your Host Family lives in the city or in an apartment building, their laundry machines may be located outside of their home or “off-site” of the building. In this case, you are responsible to buy laundry soap and pay for the cost of using the machines to wash and dry your clothes. If a Host has off-site laundry it will be noted on their Host Profile.
Curfews

Curfews depend on your Host Family rules, your age, and local city/state curfew laws. Talk to your Host Family about your assigned curfew time and applicable local laws.

In legal terms, a curfew is more than just a house rule that can result in disciplinary action if violated. Local minor curfew laws are typically enacted at the state and local level, and prohibit people of a certain age (usually under 18) from being in public or in a business establishment during certain hours (such as between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.). This is because people under 18 are considered to be minors, or children, in the United States. Regardless of your age, your Host Family’s curfew rules must be respected.

Your Host family may also have an Internet curfew as part of their house rules. Internet service may be suspended after a certain time in the evening so that students don’t spend too much time on the internet or waste time that could be better spent on other activities. Host Families impose internet curfews to encourage students to go to bed on time so their lack of sleep does not contribute to poor performance in school or behavioral issues.

Electronics Use

Your Host Family may place limits on electronic usage (cell phone, computer, gaming device, etc.) at meals or in the home. Remember, to text when you are involved in any type of social interaction—conversation, listening, in class, or, especially, at the dinner table. If you really need to communicate with someone who is not at the event—or at the table—excuse yourself, send your message, and return as soon as you can. Proper cell phone etiquette shows respect!

Activities Outside of the Home

When making plans with friends remember to keep you Host Family informed. If you want to do things outside of the home without your Host Family, remember several things:

- You should tell your Host Family where you will be.
- You should tell your Host Family when you will return home.
- Keep your cell phone on and within hearing range in case your Host Family calls you
- Take enough personal spending money with you to get to and from home safely
- If you would like your Host Family to drive you somewhere, you should ask them in advance. Remember, they are not obligated to provide transportation that has not been booked.

General Safety Precaution

1. Always tell your Host Family where you are going and when you expect to return.
2. Consider using an App on your smart phone to “share your location” with your host family so they can locate you if you ever get lost or need help.
3. Don’t go out alone late at night. If you are out after dark, be sure you have a safe way to get home.
4. Take your cell phone with you and keep it turned on so your Host Family can reach you.
5. Always know where you are! If you don’t, get directions before you leave your location.
6. Designer clothing, shoes, handbags or expensive accessories may make you a target for theft or assault. Leave these designer items at home.
7. Dressing provocatively can lead to unwelcome sexual attention and may put you in danger. Protect yourself by dressing modestly.
8. Don’t get in cars with strangers or ride with someone who has been drinking or is otherwise impaired.
9. Don’t explore empty or poorly lit alleyways or back roads.
10. Don’t show off money - keep it hidden until you need to use it.
11. Keep a close watch on your possessions. If you don’t need to bring it with you, leave it at home!
12. Don’t leave personal belongings at school or in public places.
13. Respect your Host Family’s rules about locking doors and windows. If you don’t know these rules, ask!
14. Stay aware of your surrounding on public transit and in crowds. Pickpockets love large, crowded areas.
15. Don’t walk around with your headphones in or your phone out and accessible to theft.
16. In the event of an emergency call 911 for Fire, Police and Ambulance services.
Friend and Classmate Visits

You must ask your Host Family before you invite your friends over to the Host’s home. Overnight guests are not permitted in your homestay unless your Host Family gives you permission to invite them. In addition, you must receive permission from your Host Family prior to sleeping over at a friend’s house.

Overseas or Local Visitors

Whether you are expecting a visit from your family, a relative, family friend, teacher, classmate or anyone else, you must always notify your Homestay Coordinator and Host Family before any visitor is allowed to come to the home and meet you. Without prior notification, your visitor will not be allowed to visit the Host Family’s home. Without exception, written permission from your biological parent is required to be on file with MIF in order for anyone other than your Host Family to pick you up from the Host home if you are a minor. This is a safety and liability issue.

Visitors are not permitted to stay in the homestay with you. The Homestay is only for guests who have an active Homestay Contract with MIF. Your Homestay Coordinator can assist your visitor with other local accommodations.

Smoking, Alcohol and Controlled Substances

Tobacco - The legal age to purchase, possess or smoke cigarettes or tobacco products in the United States is 18 or 21 years old depending on what city you live in. This includes electronic cigarettes or “e-cigs.” Minors are not permitted to purchase, use, or be in possession of tobacco products inside of or outside of the homestay. If you are of legal age, a designated area outside the home can be used only if your Host Family allows smoking on their property. Smoking is never allowed in the Host Family’s home. Smoking while underage or inside the home is immediate grounds for Contract termination and forfeiture of homestay fees.

Alcohol - The legal age to purchase and drink alcohol in the United States is 21 years old. Minor Students are not permitted to drink or possess any form of alcohol. It is illegal for your Host Family to buy or provide you with alcohol, or for you to drink in your Host Family’s home or on their property if you are underage. If you are of legal age, ask your Host Family what their alcohol policy is before bringing alcohol into the home. Some Host Families may allow alcohol consumption in the home while others do not.

Illegal Drugs and Controlled Substances – Illegal drugs come in many forms. Regardless of their form, no student is permitted to use, take, ingest, or to have in his/her possession, any illegal drug, controlled or restricted substance(s). If you are found using illegal drugs, controlled or restricted substances, or prescription medication not prescribed to you, you will be removed from your homestay and your paid fees forfeited. Even though legal in some cities or states, MIF does not allow its Homestay Program Participants to possess or consume marijuana.

Prescription Medication - “Drugs” or “controlled substances” may also refer to legally obtained medications prescribed by a doctor. You must always be able to present proof of your prescription from your doctor if you wish to bring prescribed medicine into your homestay with you. All prescribed medications must immediately be disclosed to your Homestay Coordinator and your Host Family. This is for your safety and safekeeping of the prescription or controlled substance.

Summary - Because of strict US laws and the inherent dangers in the use of cigarettes, drugs and alcohol, offenses in these areas during the duration of the Homestay Contract are subject to strict actions by MIF whether or not that activity takes place inside or outside of the homestay. Failure to follow all local State and Federal laws is considered a violation of the Homestay Contract and you will be subject to penalty or removal from your homestay without replacement. You should understand that you may be arrested and/or detained by the police if you are found to be in violation of local law(s).

Damages and Accidents

If you break something tell your Host Family right away. Host Families understand that accidents and mistakes happen. It is best to be honest and upfront about anything you may have damaged. They will work with you to replace it or resolve the issue. Always ask for help first. For example, if you do not know how to use a household item such as the microwave oven or washing machine, ask for permission and directions before you use it.

Ultimately, you are financially responsible for any damages you cause so it is important to respect your Host Family’s property. Non-payment for damages you cause is a valid reason for MIF to implement disciplinary measures, up to termination of your Contract and dismissal from your homestay.
Upon moving out at the conclusion of your homestay, you must leave your bedroom in the same order as when you arrived. Any damages to the room or cleaning costs can be billed to you or your parents. If you break something, you need to be prepared to replace or pay for anything that you break, whether it was intentional or not. See page 47 for further information on the Damage Deposit. If anything in your room is in disrepair or broken when you arrive, take note and let your HC know within the first few days. Your HC will help you document these items with your host family so the damage is not attributed to you when you move out.

Mail and Packages
You may not receive mail or packages on behalf of other people using the Host’s address. Misuse of the Host’s address may result in loss of privileges to use the address altogether. Students may set up a PO Box if they are expecting excessive amounts of packages or other persons’ mail.

Other Homestay Guests/Students in the Home
Host Families may choose to host more than one student at a time depending on the amount of space and number of rooms they have in their home, and are not restricted from doing so. Other homestay guests may be from the same or different home country or agency as you.

Interacting with your fellow homestay guests, in addition to your Host Family, is a great way to broaden your worldview through learning about other countries and their customs. You may even make a new lifelong friend!

The presence of another guest will not affect your Homestay Contract or services. You should contact your Homestay Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns relating to other homestay guests in the home.

Using English at Home
You may live with other students who share your native language. For your own benefit, it is important that you make an effort to use English as much as possible. It will help you become more fluent when you use English every day. It is up to you to use English when speaking with your Host Family, housemates, and friends. English will be the primary language spoken by the Host Family in the home during your stay. If your Host Family consistently speaks a foreign language in their home and it makes you uncomfortable, please contact your Homestay Coordinator.

Homestay tip: When is a group setting, refrain from using your native language in front of others and your host family because it’s impolite and isolates them from your conversation.

Religion and Praying
There are many different religions found in the United States. Christianity is the religion most commonly practiced, and many Americans attend church on a regular basis. Many other religions like Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism are also represented. Some families hold hands during prayer before a meal because it gives them a feeling of closeness. Students are often welcomed into the family circle in this way.

If your Host Family attends a church or other place of worship, they may invite you to attend with them. Don’t assume the Host Family is trying to impose their religious beliefs on you; they are simply trying to include you in all of their family activities. If you do not wish to attend church with them you are free to decline. Host Families are not permitted to force a student to attend church or religious services. If you ever feel pressured in this way, contact your Homestay Coordinator.

School Note: Religious schools may require students and/or host families to participate in religious services.
Food and Meals

Living abroad offers you the opportunity to try many new foods! Your Host Family will prepare meals that they are normally accustomed to cooking, some of which you may love and some of which you may dislike. Prepare to keep an open mind and step outside your comfort zone. You will have greater success in your homestay if you are open to trying new foods. Conversations about food are also a great way for you and your Host Family to learn more about each other’s cultures!

Refer to your Contract to see which meals you have booked. Your Host Family will do their best to provide well-balanced meals consisting of locally and seasonally available produce. If you are served food that you dislike or that you cannot eat for religious or health reasons, talk to your Host Family about it. They will appreciate your honesty, but also remember that your Host Family cannot cater to picky eaters by making separate meals or accommodate unreasonable or costly food requests. You will need to keep an open mind and try new things.

**Here are some ideas if you don’t like the food:**
1. Ask your Host if you can cook a meal for them (something you like).
2. Go to the grocery store and purchase things to supplement what your Host cooks.
3. Ask your Host if they wouldn’t mind incorporating inexpensive changes such as adding rice or soup to their normal meals.
4. Have conversations with your Host about the differences between your home country’s food and American food (less cheese or dairy normally used, rice with every meal, etc.)

If you ever feel that you are not getting enough food to eat, talk to your Host Family first. If you still have the same problem after you tell the Host Family, contact your Homestay Coordinator for assistance.

**BREAKFAST**

**Self-prepared: Your Host Family will provide you with food ingredients to prepare this meal.**

When you think of an American breakfast, you might think of hot breakfast items such as eggs, sausage, ham, toast, and pancakes. While American families occasionally prepare these hot foods, on most mornings they will instead eat a cold breakfast that consists of cereal and milk, yogurt and fruit, or a muffin and coffee. You may be used to your parent cooking and serving breakfast to your whole family, but in America, family members usually prepare light breakfasts for themselves and eat separately because they wake up at different times to go to work and school.

You are responsible to prepare breakfast for yourself using food items provided by your Host Family. When you first arrive, the Host Family will show you where breakfast items are stored and how to use the toaster, microwave, and stove to prepare them as necessary. You can expect your Host Family to have items such as cereal and milk, fruit, bagels, bread or muffins with butter/jam, oatmeal, eggs or frozen waffles/pancakes for you to eat for breakfast. You are welcome to supplement your cold breakfast by purchasing soup packets to make in addition to what the Host Family provides. Remember before using ANY kitchen appliances to ask your Host Family to show you how it works because you will be held financially responsible to pay for anything you break.

**LUNCH**

**Self-prepared: Your Host Family will provide you with food ingredients to prepare this meal.**

Lunch is also typically a cold meal in America that is prepared individually by each family member. Sandwiches are a favorite traditional American lunch because they are convenient and portable. Your Host Family will provide bread, lunch meat, spreads, peanut butter, and jam to make sandwiches. They will also have foods such as chips, raw vegetables for salads, and fruit. They may have frozen foods such as pizza and chicken nuggets that are quick and easy to heat and sometimes there may be leftovers available to reheat from dinner the night before.
School Lunch for K-12 Students:
Students in grades K-12 are responsible to buy their own lunch from the school cafeteria when school is in session. If you prefer to bring lunch from home, you will need to prepare it using ingredients you purchase for yourself unless your Contract specifically states otherwise.

DINNER
Served family-style: Your Host Family will prepare the evening meal and sit down with you to eat.

Dinner will be prepared and served family-style as much as possible according to your Host Family’s schedule. Of course, there will be occasions when you or your Host Family will not be home during dinner time due to school activities or scheduling conflicts. In this case, there will be food for you to reheat when you are ready to eat. Let your Host Family know if you make plans to have dinner with friends instead of eating with your family. This will help them plan their meals.

Americans usually prepare a starch (such as a mashed potato), a protein (such as meat), and a vegetable for dinner. It is common for American families to serve protein from non-meat sources such as beans, lentils, eggs, and cheese, so do not be surprised if your Host Family sometimes serves dinner without meat. For instance, your Host Family may serve lasagna, pasta with vegetables, or soup with lentils for dinner instead of a meat dish. It is common for American families to alternate between eating cooked vegetables and fresh salads.

LEFTOVERS
A large main dish that is served more than once. This is known as “leftovers.”

A large main dish that is served more than once is called “leftovers.” Leftovers are a normal part of the American family dinner table. Most host families have a busy schedule between work and school, sports, hobbies, and commuting and don’t have time to cook a new dish every night. Your host will usually prepare a large main dish and serve it more than once during the week. Some cultures view leftovers as “unhealthy” and lacking in nutrition, however as long as perishable foods are covered and stored in the refrigerator they will last for several days and maintain their nutritional content.

RESTAURANT MEALS
Some of your meals with your family may be eaten at a restaurant instead of being prepared at home. If your Host Family invites you to the restaurant; they are responsible to pay for your meal. HOWEVER, you must ask what your allowed food budget is for the meal and beverage, if applicable. In other words, you cannot order an expensive lobster and steak dinner if your Host has budgeted for pasta. If you choose to go to a restaurant or eat outside of the home (with friends, at the Mall, etc.) or if you join your Host Family on an optional activity or outing, then you are responsible for the cost of your own meal, snacks and beverages.

SNACKS
Talk to your Host Family about what snacks and flavored beverages (if any) are available to you between meals and what is the appropriate portion size for each snack. Many families will allow you to prepare your own snacks. If you want snacks that your host family doesn’t provide, you can accompany them to the store to purchase these yourself.

Reminder: **You are not permitted to eat or store food in your bedroom unless your Host Family gives you permission to do so. Keeping food in your room can draw pests and bugs.**
School and Academics

There are many exciting new experiences and activities you will enjoy during your time in America. However, the most important part of your stay will be your schooling. It is important to work hard in school, complete all homework assignments, and attend school each day it is in session.

Attending school in another country with a different language can be difficult at first. It is easy to become overwhelmed when you first arrive. Your teachers, school officials, Host Family, parent/agent, and Homestay Coordinator are all available to support you. We understand how difficult it can be and want to help you do well! However, you must make every effort to work hard and accept help in order to succeed.

If you’re in the US on a student visa for language school, college, university, or any other academic program you must check in with your school who issues your visa shortly after arriving, whenever you make changes to your address, contact information or need authorization to travel.

School Orientation
Your school will usually hold Orientation for newly arriving students and in some cases for Host Families also. This will give you a chance to see the school, meet some of your teachers, academic advisor, and become familiar with the school rules and policies as well as purchase required school books and/or supplies.

Parents or agents of K-12 students have the option of booking a K-12 Student Concierge Service through MIF that provides the student with dedicated assistance for school set up, orientation, and support throughout the school year for various emergency and additional non-contracted services.

Get to know your School’s Handbook
It is your responsibility to obtain a copy of your school’s handbook. Much like this MIF Homestay Handbook, your school’s handbook is a valuable tool that you can refer to whenever you have a questions about school policy. Your school handbook will detail all things relating to your schooling, student requirements and expectations and what you can do to remain in compliance with school policy on and off campus.

It is your responsibility to know and understand the school handbook so that you don’t inadvertently violate school policies, dress code or procedures. Demerits can be issued by your school regardless of your intent to violate or not violate handbook guidelines and school policy. Ignorance of policies is not a valid excuse.

School Attendance and Absence(s)
American K-12 schools are typically in session five days a week, Monday through Friday unless it is a holiday or during a school break. Daily school attendance is compulsory in America. Students must attend school every day it is in session unless they are ill AND excused by a doctor’s note or host parent permission. Many schools set attendance requirements that must be followed. Students who do not attend school regularly and exceed the maximum allowed absences will automatically fail their classes, will not be allowed to return to the school the following semester or academic year, and may even jeopardize their visa status.

Only your Host Family can report you absent from school. Students cannot report themselves absent from school for any reason to include illness, appointments, tardiness, etc. per school policy. You are required to inform your Host Family right away if you need to be absent from school so that your Host Family can notify the school accordingly.

What to do if you feel sick?
If you feel sick tell your Host Family right away. They will help you decide if you need to go to the doctor or if you should go to school. Do not wait to tell your Host Parents until right before you leave for school or right before they leave for work because this may cause everyone to be late. If you are sick they may need to call off work in order to take you to the doctor so make sure to talk to them as soon as you start to feel ill. For more information about doctor’s appointments and medical insurance, refer to page 34.
School Uniforms and Supplies
Most American private schools have a required student uniform. Both school and P.E. (Physical Education) or Gym uniforms can usually be ordered in advance or purchased at Orientation. Be sure to ask your parent or agent to order your uniforms in advance. Host Families are not permitted to pay for the student’s personal items such as school supplies, school and gym uniforms and shoes, musical instruments or extracurricular activity fees, etc. All students should arrive to the United States with some spending money and an active credit card in order to purchase their supplies and necessary personal items.

Homework
Homework assignments, class participation, and quizzes are a significant portion of your final grade in many classes. It is important to complete homework assignments each day and turn them in on time. Your Host Family is happy to help you with your homework and school projects if you ask. Ask your Host Family where the best place for you to study is and when they can help you with homework.

Grades and Report Cards
Students are responsible for their individual academic performance. Communicate regularly with your natural parents about your schooling, grades and areas in which you need help. You are required to send your grades to your parents and keep them informed. Your Host Family or Homestay Coordinator can help you send your report cards.

If you need extra help or dedicated tutoring in a certain subject, talk to your teacher, student advisor or school faculty member first. Many teachers set aside tutoring hours for students who have questions or need additional help outside of regular class time. If you are confused about your assignments or need more explanation, don’t wait until you are too far behind to ask for help – use the resources offered by the school to get help right away as this will keep you on a successful track. Your Homestay Coordinator and parent/agent will also work in cooperation with your school to find and arrange a tutoring service outside of school if needed. If you exhibit poor school performance, grades or behavioral issues, your natural parents or agent may ask your Host Family to implement house rules or disciplinary actions on their behalf for school related issues.

First Days of School
You will be completely immersed in American culture which can be very overwhelming for the first few days and even into the first couple of weeks. You may find you are coming home tired, frustrated and homesick. Don’t become discouraged! These are very normal emotions for someone who has just entered a new culture. Each day it will get easier for you. Keep busy and get involved in your Host Family and activities. Meeting new friends and staying busy can help with the adjustment. Talk to your Host Family about being paired with a school “buddy.” This would be someone your own age who can show you around school for the first couple of days. Your school may be able to pair you with a fellow classmate if you ask.
K-12 Student Concierge Service
Parents or agents of K-12 students have the option of booking a K-12 Student Concierge Service through MIF that provides the student with dedicated assistance for school set up, orientation, and support throughout the school year for various emergency and additional non-contracted services.

K-12 Student Concierge Service includes*:
1. Two (2) Airport Transfers: initial arrival and final departure
2. School orientation attendance and transportation
3. School shopping: assistance with shopping for uniforms, shoes, school books and school supplies
4. Assistance with cell phone service set-up
5. Coordinating with the school faculty for completion of post-acceptance school forms required on student’s arrival such as: bussing, lunch forms, emergency contact form, medical information card, etc. (Does not include application or I-20 paperwork)
6. Medical appointments: scheduling and transportation for school required medical physical, dental check, any missing immunizations
7. Homestay Coordinator support with booking non-contracted services such as: emergency travel arrangements, tutoring services, transportation arrangements requested outside of contracted services

*Additional fees apply for tolls, non-local airport transfers (over 15 mi distance from Homestay), New York airports and students booking Unaccompanied Minor Service Package with the airlines. Additional airport transfers may be booked separately. Students must pay for all personal purchases/expenses, medical costs and cell phone plan. Host families are not permitted to pay for Student purchases or loan the Student money. Fees for non-contracted services will be quoted at time of request.

The K-12 Student Concierge Service is detailed on page 16-17. Talk to your Parent, agent or Homestay Coordinator about booking this K-12 Student Concierge Service. The K-12 Student Concierge Service must be waived on the Homestay Contract if not booked.
Transportation

Most students find the lack of readily available transportation in the US one of the hardest adjustments for them to make. In large cities, public transportation is widely used and readily available. However, elsewhere cars are the primary source of transportation for commuting.

If you travel by public transit, a good commute is considered 60 minutes or less. Your commute may be a combination of walking, bus and/or train. Depending on your homestay program, your Contract may or may not include transportation provided by your host family. See the sections below for additional information.

When you first arrive, ask your Host Family for information on the local public transportation system and local ride share companies such as Uber or Lyft. Many Host Families work full time jobs or have children and cannot drive you to and from school or errands. If your family is going somewhere such as the mall or grocery store, you may ask to ride along, but keep in mind that they are not obligated to drive you to and from places.

School Transportation
Transportation to and from school is not included in your homestay fee unless you have booked transportation and it is outlined in your Contract. K-12 School transportation for students can range from school bussing, shuttle service or Host Family drop off and pick up from school.

Don’t be late! If you ride the School Bus, you will need to be outside and waiting at the designated bus stop 10 minutes prior to the assigned pick up time. If you miss the bus, not only will you be late to school, but your Host Family might be late to work if they have to drive you to school. If you make a habit of waking up late and missing the school bus, you will likely need to find your own way to school. For areas where there is not a school bus available, your Host Family will drive you to and from school. In either case, make sure your alarm is set so you wake up in time to get dressed, eat breakfast and complete your morning routine before you have to leave for school.

After school activities:
If you want to join a sport or after school activity, you must first consider transportation. Some schools provide a late bus to accommodate these situations – others do not. If there is no bus option, talk with your HC or agent about transportation arrangements PRIOR to making a commitment.
If you wish to sign up for an activity that will require extra transportation from your host family on a regular basis, such as music lessons or sports games, this extra transportation will need to be booked by your agent or natural parent. If your host family can’t drive you and you still want to join an activity, you must make carpool arrangement with friends or take an Uber/taxi at your own expense to and from the activity.
Coordinating Rides with Your Host Family

If you want your Host Family to provide a ride for you to a social activity, errand, or event plan ahead and ask your Host Family at least 2 days in advance. This does not mean they can always provide it, but by giving at least 2 days’ notice for planning, your family may be able to rearrange their schedule in order to meet your transportation needs, so planning is important.

Most host families are happy to try and accommodate a reasonable request, but asking if you can be taken to the mall in the middle of dinner is bad timing. Asking in advance will give the Host Family reasonable time to consider and reply to you. Be prepared to take another means of transportation if they say “no.” If they cannot drive, you will be expected to take a car service, taxi, rideshare (such as Uber), or arrange carpooling with classmates for additional, non-booked transportation. Ask your Homestay Coordinator if you need help finding out about local transportation options.

Remember, your Host Family is not obligated or expected to provide transportation outside of what has been booked on your Homestay Contract. Host Families have to balance many different schedules like work, school, children and other obligations and activities. Having patience and understanding during the time of your transition into their daily routine will show kindness and respect for their schedule. If your family is going somewhere such as the mall or grocery store, ask to ride along with them. Living with a family means learning how to work together. Coordinating transportation is a good example of this.

**Unusual traffic conditions and inclement weather are outside of the control of the Host Family and they cannot be held responsible for delays caused by this. Your Host Family will transport you to and from your school or destination in a safe and timely manner as much as is within their control.**

Driving in the US, Obtaining a Driving Permit/License

For safety and liability reasons, students are not permitted under any circumstances to operate any motor vehicle (including but not limited to motorcycles, 4-wheelers, mopeds, watercrafts, and cars) belonging to the Host Family.

MIF and MIF Host Families cannot assist or aid Students of any age with pursuing or obtaining a driver’s license, enrolling in driving school, or purchasing a car. If a minor student wishes to enroll in a driving school, their parent or legal guardian must be physically present in the US to sign any paperwork required by the driving school including liability waivers and/or authorization forms. Students may never drive or practice with any Host Family vehicle. Any costs associated with driver’s training are the financial responsibility of the student and their parents.

All costs associated with purchasing a car, insurance, maintenance, and storage of the car when present or away from the US are the responsibility of the student. Students may only maintain a vehicle at the host family’s home if the Host Family expressly permits this. Students must obtain written permission from their host family before registering their vehicle to the Host’s home address (such as for insurance purposes).
**Airport Transfers**

Your Homestay Coordinator or agent will help arrange airport transfers for your arrival and departure as needed. The Host Family will usually provide airport pickup/drop off for their student, but, if they are unavailable, an alternate mode of transit will be arranged for you. You may also arrange your own transportation, if you wish. Airport transfer fees are based on the method of transport and distance to the airport from the Host Family’s home. Airport transfers arranged by MIF for transfer other than by Host Family may incur and administration fee.

**Unaccompanied Minor**

Some airlines require minor student traveling without an accompanying adult to book the airline’s Unaccompanied Minor service. Students who fly using an airline’s Unaccompanied Minor service will be charged an additional fee by MIF for all airport transfers. This fee is in addition to the normal rate and is independent of the fee the airline charges the student (Airline fees must be paid directly to the airline.)

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**WHILE TRAVELING:**

Update your Homestay Coordinator with any changes to your flight status or arrival information so your Host Family can be notified of an early or delayed arrival.

• If you have booked airport transfers and your flight is delayed but you don’t update your HC and Host Family, you may be charged additional fees if your host family has to make additional trips to return to the airport for you, or you may need to take a taxi at your own expense if they are unable to do so.

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**Bookings additional airport transfers:**

Your Homestay Contract will list the number of Airport Transfers that have been booked by you, or your agent/parents for you. If you need additional airport transfers not listed on your Homestay Contract, contact your Homestay Coordinator to make these arrangements at least 21 days in advance of your intended travel date.

Last minute request are difficult to accommodate so allow plenty of time for your homestay coordinator to work with your request. If your request for additional airport transfers cannot be accommodated you will need to arrange your own method of getting to/from the airport. A taxi or rideshare company is often the best option. Alternatively you can book a car service or airport shuttle, or take public transit, where available.
Travel, Vacation and Trips Protocol

The United States is a large country with great diversity in its people and landscapes, so it is natural that students will want to travel while in the United States. MIF and your Host Family are committed to your safety and wellbeing during your homestay. Therefore, MIF has established the following rules and procedures for all student travel. Your homestay payment(s) are due according to the dates listed in your Homestay Contract even if you are absent from the home for travel or vacation.

Adults – Travel Protocol:
1. In addition to telling your Host Family, you must notify your Homestay Coordinator if you will be away from your homestay for vacation or other travel.
2. Leave your travel itinerary with your Host Family. Let them know where you are going, how long you will stay and when you will return.
3. If you require a ride to/from the airport you must notify your Homestay Coordinator in advance so they can make these arrangements for you via your Host Family or a car service. Any additional airport transfers not listed in the Homestay Contract will be billed to you for payment.

Minor Students - Permission and Protocol:
1. If you wish to travel during your homestay, you must obtain permission from your natural parents (and agent, if applicable). A signed Travel Permission Form must be submitted to MIF prior to your departure. Contact your Homestay Coordinator (or agent) to receive a Travel Authorization Form for your natural parents to complete.
   a. Travel Authorization Form is not required for travel back to your home country or if you are traveling with one of your natural parents. These are the ONLY two exceptions. If you are traveling to your home country or with a parent you still need to tell your Host Family and Homestay Coordinator.
2. Submit your travel itinerary to MIF and your Host Family prior to your departure.
3. If you require a ride to/from the airport you must notify your Homestay Coordinator in advance so they can make these arrangements for you with your Host Family or a car service. Any additional airport transfers not listed in the Homestay Contract will be billed to your parent or agent for payment.

Always let your Host Family know where you are or where you are going. Notify your family of the contact number where you can be reached. This is for your safety. They also need to know in case there is an emergency in your country and you need to be contacted.

Failure to follow MIF travel protocol may result in disciplinary action in accordance with MIF’s Three Strikes Policy (page 43). It is your responsibility to make sure your Homestay Coordinator is provided with the proper paperwork prior to your travel. This is your responsibility, not the responsibility of your Host Family!

Academic year students who plan to travel for any reason (i.e. for Winter Break or other school holidays) are advised to check with their school about any specific travel policies that they must follow in order to remain in good standing with the school. For example, leaving too early for Winter Break or returning late may affect attendance records and place your visa status in jeopardy. As the student, you are responsible to check with your school for any requirements that you must follow. It is not MIF’s responsibility to do so on your behalf.
Illness and Emergencies

All students are required to purchase and maintain health insurance throughout the entire length of their homestay. MIF does not offer medical insurance, but we can provide you with the names of insurance companies for you to contact. Ask your Homestay Coordinator or parent/agent to help you obtain health insurance prior to your arrival in the US. Make sure to carry your insurance card with you at all times and provide a copy to your Host Family.

Health Insurance

International medical insurance is not always accepted at all health care facilities so you may have to pay out of pocket at the time of treatment. Your insurance card will list a phone number or website that you can use to search for health care facilities near you who accept your insurance. Using a doctor who accepts your insurance will cost less than going to a doctor that does not accept your insurance. Consider asking the hospital or clinic first if the procedure is covered before you receive treatment. Be prepared to pay in cash if your procedure is not covered by your medical insurance. Your Host Family can assist you with making an appointment or taking you to the clinic, but the Host Family cannot pay for your health care or medicine.

What if I feel sick?

If you feel unwell or sick during school hours:
notify your teacher or School Nurse so they can assist you in contacting your Host Family, MIF and any necessary medical staff.

If you feel sick while you are at home:
tell your Host Family right away. They can help you decide which medicine is applicable for your condition or seek any medical treatment if necessary.

School Absences due to illness: Students enrolled in grades K-12 are responsible to attend school every day it is in session unless excused by a doctor’s note or the Host Family. Schools do not excuse student absences unless they are presented with a note from the doctor or Host Family. Host Families cannot provide excuse notes to students who refuse to go to the doctor or who choose to stay home for reasons other than illness. If you are not sick but wish to remain at home, you should expect to receive an unexcused absence from your school.

Medical Facilities

There are three main types of medical care facilities in America: walk-in clinics, doctor’s offices, and hospital emergency rooms. Walk-in clinics do not require an appointment and can be used with or without insurance. For minor injuries, immunizations, or to see a doctor without an appointment, a walk-in clinic like CVS Minute Clinic or Walgreens Clinic is usually the fastest and least expensive option. Doctor’s offices require an appointment and if it is the first time you are seeing the doctor you may have to schedule the appointment several days or weeks in advance. Hospital emergency rooms are for serious or life-threatening emergencies. If you seek treatment at an emergency room for a non-serious illness or injury, you will have to wait many hours and will receive a very expensive bill.
**Emergency Protocol**

A Medical Emergency is a situation where there is serious/acute injury or illness that poses an immediate risk to a person's life, limb or long term health. If you are involved in an accident or some other serious incident, contact the local authorities right away.

**DIAL 911 FOR IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

This number can be used for Fire, Police or Medical Emergencies. As soon as it is safe and pertinent to do so, contact your Homestay Coordinator so they can notify your family/agent.

If you are injured, unresponsive or unconscious, emergency responders may look for contact information in your phone or wallet to notify your family. Complete this Emergency Information Card with your Host Family's name, address, and telephone number and carry it with you.

**Appointment, Walk-in Clinic or Emergency Room?**

Always use your own good judgment when selecting where you feel most comfortable being treated for your ailment. MIF cannot make this determination for you. A variety of symptoms and illnesses are listed in the chart below with locations for you to consider having these conditions treated.
**Prescription Medications**

Keep all prescription medications in their original, labeled containers. Because of strict laws on narcotics, it may be a good idea to carry a letter from your physician explaining your need for any prescription drugs in your possession during your travels. Remember that you must inform your Homestay Coordinator and Host Family of any prescription medications you bring from your home country.

Schools for grades K-12 have strict rules regarding medication being brought on campus. You will need to receive permission from the school first before bringing any prescribed or over-the-counter medication to school. If you have daily medicine that you need to take during the school day, talk to the school nurse about the school’s rules for medicine. The nurse will keep the medicine in the office and you will need to go there each day to take it.

**Routine Medical Care**

It is best to take care of routine medical and dental care in your home country and have your prescriptions filled before you come to the United States. (To avoid any problems while traveling with prescriptions, carry paperwork from your doctor showing that you are authorized to carry the medicine with you). Pre-existing conditions, dental work, and routine check-ups or physicals may not be covered by international medical insurance. Always check with your insurance provider before scheduling appointments to avoid unexpected fees and costs.

**Mental Illness Protocol**

In America, all signs, reports and indication of mental illness are taken VERY SERIOUSLY. A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior, resulting in an inability to cope with life’s ordinary demands and routines. Students should never joke, write or make false statements that can be interrupted as a warning sign of mental illness. *Any and all* reports, behavior or signs of mental illness will be investigated immediately to the fullest extent by MIF. All involved parties (student, Host Family, school, teachers, agent and student’s parents) will be immediately notified. Students may be required to attend psychiatric counseling before being cleared to continue on with their Host Family and the MIF Homestay Program if any warning signs or indications of mental illness present.

**Warning Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness in Adults, Young Adults and Adolescents:**

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Strange thoughts (delusions), seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations)
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance abuse

[http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recognizing-warning-signs](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recognizing-warning-signs)
What if I feel sad and anxious?

Living in a new country is a major adjustment. It can be difficult to cope with so many sudden changes. It is easy to become overwhelmed while attending classes that are taught in a foreign language or interacting with peers who don’t understand your home culture. It is common for students to have anxiety about their grades or schoolwork. It can be difficult to manage these feelings when you are far away from your parents and everything that is familiar.

We want you to know that these feelings of sadness and loneliness are normal and expected when adjusting to a new culture. Your Homestay Coordinator and Host Family are prepared to help when you feel this way. Don’t hide your feelings but instead tell your host parent; sharing your struggle with your Host Family will enable them to assist you through the adjustment period. If you prefer to talk to someone outside your Host Family, your school teachers or Homestay Coordinator are also available and ready to listen. Regardless of whom you share with, just make sure you tell someone or you will continue to feel anxious and struggle alone.

What if I feel so sad that I want to harm myself?

Harming yourself is when a person deliberately hurts his or her own body because he/she feels sad and hopeless. These are some forms of self-injury:

- cutting yourself (such as using a sharp object to cut the skin)
- punching yourself or other objects
- burning yourself with cigarettes, matches or candles
- pulling out your hair
- breaking your bones or bruising yourself
- depriving yourself of, or binging on food

Often people who hold back strong emotions can begin feeling numb and may hurt themselves because it provides a false sense of relief from feeling lonely, angry, or hopeless.

*If you are hurting yourself, PLEASE ASK FOR HELP — It is possible to overcome the urge to harm your body. There are other ways to find relief and cope with your emotions. Please talk to your host parents, your doctor, or an adult you trust, like a teacher or your Homestay Coordinator.*
Conflict Resolution

Part of living with a family and adapting to each other means that both student and Host Family may occasionally face miscommunication, problems or issues that need to be talked about and worked through. Just like you may occasionally disagree with your natural parents, you will also find that this happens with your host parents. Encountering a problem in your homestay or between you and your Host Family does not mean that MIF will automatically move you to a new Host Family. MIF does not automatically grant a request to change host families without first working through the steps of Conflict Resolution.

Most problems begin with small miscommunications, misconceptions or an unrealized expectation that the student or Host Family had before even beginning the homestay. Thus, problems in the homestay can often be resolved via proper and open communication between the student and Host Family. If you do not address and resolve the misconception it will likely arise with your next Host Family if you are granted a move.

YOU are responsible to notify your Homestay Coordinator and parent or agent right away if you ever encounter a problem or issue with your homestay or Host Family. Unless your Homestay Coordinator hears from you about an issue or problem you are experiencing, the Homestay Coordinator cannot take action or may not even know that there is a problem that needs fixing.

In some situations, an immediate Host Family change may be necessary and the following Conflict Resolution process will not apply. Situations such as Host Family move, job change or inability to host the student due to medical emergencies are examples of situations in which a student may be moved right away.

Conflict Resolution Steps

Conflict resolution is an important step in identifying the problem or issue so that the Host Family and/or student can be given the opportunity to correct the issue or behavior by working towards a resolution. The following steps must be completed before a request in Host Family will be considered.

1. Identify the Problem

The first step is to notify the Homestay Coordinator that there is a problem. Host Family and student have a responsibility to notify the Homestay Coordinator in a timely manner and communicate right away that there is a problem so corrective measures can be taken.

1.1. Both the student AND Host Family can contact the Homestay Coordinator at any time to report a problem, big or small, with which they need help.

1.2. You can call, email or text your Homestay Coordinator to discuss the problem. After your phone call, your Homestay Coordinator will request the problem be submitted in writing for proper documentation and follow-up.

1.3. Clearly identify the issue and resulting problem. Offer a solution or suggestion of correction if you can.

1.4. Part of the MIF conflict resolution process is to openly discuss and share the problem in the student and Host Family’s own words so that no bias or miscommunication can occur.

1.5. If you wish your discussion to be kept confidential from the other party, you must notify your Homestay Coordinator of this. Please note however that confidential conversations or problems cannot be addressed with the other party and no resolution may be achieved.
2. **Discussing the Problem**
   During this second step the Homestay Coordinator will talk to student and Host Family together or separately to get each person’s account of the problem and discuss possible solutions.

   2.1. The Homestay Coordinator will talk to the student, the Host Family and other relevant persons involved about defining the problem, identifying possible solutions, and implementing the resolution.

   2.2. The Homestay Coordinator will share each party’s reply to the other party in the student and/or Host Family’s own words.

3. **Determine the Solution**
   The Homestay Coordinator will identify a solution and determine a course of correction for the problem.

   3.1. With feedback from the Host Family and student, the Homestay Coordinator will decide the best plan for resolving the issue and provide a written solution to the problem.

   3.2. The Homestay Coordinator will prepare a written agreement and intended course of action in order for the correction to be implemented.

   3.3. Host Family and student will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout this process.

4. **Follow-up and Monitoring**
   The Host Family and student are given the chance to abide by the solution and course of correction that has been established by the Homestay Coordinator.

   4.1. The Homestay Coordinator will check in and closely monitor the situation to ensure everyone is doing their part in following the agreement.

   4.2. Reasonable time will be provided to the Host Family and/or student to correct the problem or behavior.

5. **Final Decision**
   If all efforts by the student and Host Family fail to correct the problem, the Homestay Coordinator will issue the final decision to move the student and begin looking for a new Host Family.

   5.1. If the Homestay Coordinator decides it is best for the student to be moved to a new Host Family, then the Homestay Coordinator will begin the preparations to move the student. It is important to understand that the decision to move the student to a new Host Family is made by MIF and the Homestay Coordinator.

   5.2. **Under no circumstances is the student permitted to move themselves to a new Host Family.** Students who move without the authorization of MIF may be placed on Behavioral Probation or dismissed from the Program.
Requesting a Host Family Change

MIF’s Homestay Program is designed for you to be placed with a Host Family specifically selected by you or your parent and/or agent. For this reason, requests to change Host Families after you begin the homestay are usually not granted. If the student or Host Family wishes to request a Host Family change due to problems that arise during the homestay, they must first complete steps 1 through 5 of the Conflict Resolution process prior to making the request. Students who create problems to “force” a move will face disciplinary action.

In some situations, the Homestay Coordinator may deem that an immediate Host Family change is necessary. For example, a Host Family move, job change, schedule changes, inability to host the student due to medical reasons, emergencies, or the home environment becoming unsuitable are all examples of situations in which the Homestay Coordinator may choose to move a student immediately.

Steps to request a Host Family change

If you wish to change your Host Family after you arrive, you must follow the outlined steps below:

1. You must be living in your elected homestay to request a change in Host Families.
2. You must have completed the Conflict Resolution steps 1 through 5.
3. You must submit a written request to your Homestay Coordinator stating the reason that you want to change Host Families.
4. The Homestay Coordinator will review your request and determine if and when it may be possible to change Host Families.
5. If your move request is approved, your Homestay Coordinator will make arrangements for you to move.

Unless your Homestay Coordinator directs you otherwise, you must remain with your current Host Family until a new Host Family is secured for you. If you choose to live elsewhere while a new Host Family is secured for you, you will do so at your own expense and forfeit monies paid for the days you are absent from your assigned Host Family. Students on Behavioral Probation are ineligible from requesting a Host Family move or being offered the option of a Courtesy Move.

Students are not allowed to move themselves to a new Host Family. All moves must be authorized by MIF and the Homestay Coordinator. If a move from one Host Family to another is warranted, the Homestay Coordinator will select and screen a new family prior to the student’s move. MIF has strict criteria for the screening and selection of host families. Before a student can move, the Homestay Coordinator must properly screen the new Host Family in order to ensure the safety of the student.

If a student moves him or herself to a new Host Family, without the approval of the Homestay Coordinator, they will be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the Program. A student who voluntarily withdraws from the Program is still obligated to the Terms of the Homestay Contract including the Cancellation Policy and the payment of their homestay fees.

All placement or re-placements of students will be with a Host Family who meets the criteria of an Approved MIF Host Family. If an Approved MIF Host Family has been provided to you for your re-placement during your Homestay Contract dates and you refuse to confirm and move to the new Host Family, you will be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the MIF Homestay Program. Students who voluntarily withdraw from the Program are still obligated to the Terms of the Homestay Contract including the Cancellation Policy and the payment of their homestay fees. See section on Voluntary Withdraw on page 10.
**Valid and Invalid Reasons for Moving**

MIF Host Families reserve the student’s room and commit to hosting each student for the duration of their Contract. In the same way, you are also required to commit to the Host Family for the duration of your Contract. It is unfair to the Host Family if you wish to move without a valid reason. For this reason, MIF has established valid and invalid reasons for Host Family replacement that are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid reasons for Host Family Change:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(After Conflict Resolution has been completed, when applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Homestay Contract is not being fulfilled (room type, meals, transportation, or booked tutoring/activities on Homestay Contract are not being provided)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Your school or doctor determines your health or safety may be compromised by living in the home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Host Family experiences an emergency where they cannot house you any longer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invalid reasons for Host Family Change:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Courtesy Move Fee will apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You want to move to be closer to school or live near or with friends</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• You do not like the Host Family Rules or participating in household chores</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• You don’t like the food the Host Family serves</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• You want to move to a Host Family with a higher income or socioeconomic class</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Your Host Family has other guests/students in the home</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Courtesy Move**

Host Family replacement for invalid reasons will be approved on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Homestay Coordinator pending Host Family availability. If the Courtesy Move request is approved, the following fees will apply:

- Courtesy Move Fee of $2000.00
- Any applicable increases in the homestay rate relating to the change in Host Family

These fees will be invoiced directly to the Signee on your Homestay Contract and payment must be received before the student can be moved. Students on Behavioral Probation are ineligible from requesting a Host Family move or being offered the option of a Courtesy Move.

**False Accusations or Creating Problems to “force a move”**

Students are offered the chance to change host families via Courtesy Move when a valid reason to change host families is not present. However, sometimes a student will seek to force a move by creating problems or making false claims against the host family or other students/guests in the home. Students who use bad behavior or break host family rules to create problems in the homestay will be disciplined in accordance with MIF Disciplinary Policy found on page 43.

MIF’s top priority is the safety and wellbeing of its students, so all claims are taken seriously and will be promptly investigated. If claims against the Host Family or MIF employees are found to be false or exaggerated, the student will face disciplinary action, up to being dismissed from the program, and may incur financial penalties which may include, but are not limited to: investigation, legal or professional services fees, and/or travel and accommodation costs of MIF employee(s) to investigate the matter.
Changes In Service(s) Due To Host Family Moves

It is important to note that homestay rates may vary from Host Family to Host Family. Your Homestay rate may be subject to an increase should a change to Host Families occur. MIF will immediately notify the Signee on your Homestay Contract of any changes to the homestay rate prior to your move to a new Host Family.

If you are moved to a new Host Family, MIF will do its best to ensure the seamless continuation of services already in place; however, for reasons outside of MIF’s control, we cannot guarantee the continuation of originally booked services should a change to Host Families occur. A change in contracted services provided relating to Host Family change may include, but is not limited to: transportation method and frequency, family type, pets in the home, private bathroom availability, distance to Client’s school/destination, meals and dietary accommodations, etc.

School or Location Changes

MIF cannot guarantee that you will be able to transfer your homestay location during your existing Contract dates to a new location if you decide to change your school or placement location. If you wish to make a location or school change, contact your Homestay Coordinator so that he/she may explore the available options with you for re-location.

If MIF is able to accommodate your transfer to a new location, a Courtesy Move fee may apply (page 41). You are responsible for all expenses incurred in your move or while waiting for your new Host Family to become available. If MIF is unable to accommodate your new location and provide you with a new Host Family, you have the option to withdraw from the Program or remain in your homestay until your Contract end date. Withdraw information and terms are located on page 10.

Homestay Refund Plan

Homestay Refund Plan is only available academic students who book an MIF Homestay Contract for a minimum of one (1) academic semester. The Plan provides homestay insurance to refund unused homestay fees (subject to terms) when a student must withdraw early or is dismissed. The insurance plan provides peace of mind knowing that your financial investment is secured. More information can be found in the Student sections of our website or you may contact your Homestay Coordinator to book this coverage. You can find more information about this here: myinternationalfamily.com/homestay-refund-plan
MIF Disciplinary Policy

Outlined in this section are various examples of unacceptable behavior with the ensuing and escalating repercussions. **All students are required to comply with MIF’s Disciplinary Policy while in the MIF Homestay Program.** Not reading the behavior policy is not an excuse for poor behavior or being excused from the consequences. MIF makes every effort to counsel and support students and host families so that everyone can enjoy a successful and rewarding homestay experience. It is never MIF’s desire to remove a student from the Homestay Program without exploring all possible options and remedies prior to dismissing the student.

There are several levels of discipline for students, which may result from either behavioral or academic issues. The first level is simply a discussion of the issue between you, your HC and any applicable additional parties (natural parents, your agent, school, host family, etc.). The next levels generally result from an Incident Report. Depending on the severity of the problem, and if the problem has been ongoing, you may receive a verbal warning, a written warning, a probationary letter, or ultimately be dismissed from the MIF Homestay Program. Levels of discipline are determined by the severity of the violation.

**MIF Three Strikes Policy**

1**st** Strike = Warning

For the first violation/offense, the Student will be given a verbal and/or written warning and expected to improve his or her behavior immediately. Once a Student is given his/her 1st Strike, he or she must show significant improvement. The HC will discuss the problem with the Student, their parents (if applicable) and Host Family to suggest possible solutions. If the Student makes an honest effort to correct the problem, the 1st or 2nd Strike may be lifted or removed.

2**nd** Strike = Behavioral Probation

For the second violation/offense the Student will be placed on Behavioral Probation. MIF places Students on Behavioral Probation (2nd Strike) as a means of giving them an additional opportunity to correct the mistakes he or she has made prior to the decision being made to dismiss them from the Program. The student will be given a Behavioral Probation letter which they will be required to sign as acknowledgement of receipt and acceptance. If the student is a Minor the letter will also be sent to the Homestay Contract Signee (agent or parent) for signature by their natural parent/legal guardian and returned to MIF. Failure to sign and return the Probation Letter by the student and/or natural parent will result in the student’s dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program.

Note: Under some circumstances a Student may remain on Probation for the duration of his/her Program. If the Student fails to correct the problem or breaks the terms of their Probation Letter, he or she will face a third and final Strike which will result in dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program.

3**rd** Strike = Dismissal

The third and final violation/offence will result in the student’s termination and dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program. Unless the student is a Minor, the student must vacate the homestay immediately. If the student is a Minor, the student’s parent, agent or legal guardian will be given 72 hours after the notice of dismissal is issued by MIF to arrive and collect the student or make travel arrangements for the student to return home.

Serious violations of the Homestay Contract or house rules may result in an automatic 2**nd** or 3**rd** strike as deemed appropriate by MIF even if the student has not received a 1**st** or 2**nd** strike. Examples of misbehavior and their potential consequences are listed on the following page.
The 1st Strike or 2nd Strike will be given anytime a student demonstrates misbehaviors that violate MIF or Host Family rules and expectations, or failing to comply with MIF policies and procedures as outlined in the MIF Homestay Handbook and Homestay Contract.

1. failing to do assigned chores or keeping room tidy as instructed to do so by the Host Family
2. failing to follow written or verbal Host Family house rules
3. missing or violating curfew(s)
4. staying away overnight or traveling out of town without permission
5. violating smoking or alcohol policies* (*may result in immediate third strike and dismissal)
6. failing to attend school
7. not completing homework or school assignments
8. failure to attend school without Host Family authorization
9. failure to complete chores
10. keeping food, food wrappers or dirty dishes in their bedroom
11. lying or deceptive words or actions

The 3rd Strike and dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program will be given for the following behavior/action:

1. breaking the law (i.e. shoplifting, drinking alcohol if underage, etc.)
2. illicit or lewd behavior, participation or actions
3. aggressive behavior, language, or actions
4. threatening, harmful or potentially harmful behavior/actions to themselves or other persons
5. destruction or possession of property that belongs to others
6. undisclosed pre-existing or newly occurring mental illness*, including threatening or inflicting self-harm of any nature
7. school expulsion for any reason

*Mental illness is a serious health concern. Immediate protocol for handling this concern is outlined in detail on page 36.

Dismissal from the Program

If a student fails to abide by the MIF Rules of Conduct or a decision made by the MIF staff, he or she may face dismissal from the Program and be removed from his or her homestay without re-placement. Dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program due to receiving a 3rd Strike results in automatic termination of the Contract. Refunds are not issued for terminated Contracts. All paid fees will be forfeited and any remaining balance due on the Contract must immediately be remitted to MIF.

MIF will make every effort to work with the student to correct misbehavior prior to dismissing the student from the Program, however, the student’s equal effort and cooperation must be exhibited.

If a student is dismissed before their Contract end date, MIF will provide the notice of dismissal in writing to the Signee of the Homestay Contract. Any decision to dismiss the student will be considered final. It is our wish that all students have a successful homestay while in the United States. We hope that students will choose to work toward this goal also.
Harassment/Sexual Harassment

MIF is committed to creating a climate inside and outside of the homestay that is supportive and respectful of all students, Host Families and community members. Therefore, harassment of any kind, including harassment based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental challenge, or ethnic and religious background is a serious violation of MIF policy and will not be tolerated.

Harassment is defined as offensive or unwanted behavior that may be intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive. Sexual Harassment may be manifested in physical, visual and/or verbal displays. Acts of Harassment are not only a violation of this policy but may also constitute illegal discrimination under state and federal laws. Students are encouraged to inform the harasser that his/her behavior is unwelcome, offensive or in poor taste and report such behaviors to an appropriate authority figure.

Examples of Harassment include:
- unwelcome sexual advances, gestures, comments or contact
- threats which imply abuse
- offensive jokes; implied or stated remarks concerning sexual preference
- ridicule, slurs, derogatory action or remarks
- bullying

Procedure:

1. The students should report any incidents of harassment immediately to their Homestay Coordinator, parent/agent, school faculty member and/or the police.

2. Every report of harassment will be taken seriously and investigated immediately. Confidentiality will be maintained for all reports. Following the report, MIF will conduct an investigation involving local police if needed. The investigation may include, but is not limited to the following:
   a. Meet with the person registering the complaint.
   b. Meet with the person being accused.
   c. Conduct interviews of possible witnesses to the events.

3. Following the investigation, MIF will determine the seriousness of the accusation, and, if warranted, administer disciplinary action.

Reports of Harassment are taken very seriously and can have lasting repercussions for the accused. Because of this, if the accuser is found to have made a false report, the accuser will face immediate dismissal from the MIF Homestay Program and/or be reported to local law enforcement for purporting false claims.
The Internet and Social media are great ways to keep in touch with your parents and family back at home as well as make new connections with your Host Family and friends in the United States. It is important to be mindful of what you post online and whom you befriend on social networking sites. People and friends you associate with can be a reflection of you, whether good or bad. Avoid posting any photos of yourself that portrays you in a compromising manner or that may reflect poorly on your abilities to make good decisions. Remember, what you decide to post or share online can be viewed by others.

**Guidelines for using and posting to Social Media**

- Do not make negative comments about your homestay or Host Family
- Do not make passive aggressive comments about peers or family that could be misinterpreted
- Do not take part in online bullying or harassment of school peers
- Do not post pictures of yourself making inappropriate gestures, dressing provocatively, or engaging in illegal activities such as drinking or smoking, etc.
- Do not befriend those that post inappropriate comments or photos
- Do not befriend or talk to people online that you do not know. Never agree to meet a stranger in person as this can be very dangerous

**Language and Sexual Content in TV shows, movies, music and online**

Different cultures have different views on sexuality and age appropriate language. In America, many families believe sexual content is not age-appropriate for high school students. Your Host Family will have rules regarding what content they allow in their home and what they allow their own children to watch. You are required to abide by the standard your Host Family sets even if it is different from the rules your natural parents have for you in your home country. American high schools have a student code of conduct for what is considered acceptable and unacceptable student behavior for both on and off campus. Your school and Host Family may restrict what you are permitted to watch, download or what type of music you may be able to listen to.

**Internet Downloads and Content**

Internet access is provided to you by your Host Family during your stay so that you can complete schoolwork and stay in touch with friends and family. Your Host Family has the authority to restrict or revoke your internet privileges if you are not using the internet responsibly. Your Host Family may impose an internet curfew to keep you from staying up late at night on the internet or downloading inappropriate content.

Downloading copyrighted material such as movies and music is illegal in America and can be traced back to your Host Family if you are using their internet connection. Violations of copyright laws carry a heavy monetary fine and even the possibility of a federal prison sentence for each violation. Computer viruses from downloaded content can infect your computer and the Host Family’s network. This can cause serious damage and be expensive to fix. Remember, you are financially responsible for damage you cause to the Host Family home or belongings.

Remember that as an international student you are a representative of your country, family, and school. It is important that all content you post, view, and send online be appropriate and respectful. Posting inappropriate or harmful content online will result in disciplinary action and potential dismissal from your homestay according to MIF Disciplinary Policy.
**Miscellaneous**

**Damage Deposit**

Some Homestay Contracts will require a refundable Damage Deposit. The Damage Deposit will be due with your first Homestay Payment. Damage Deposits are refundable at the end of your stay, without interest, as long as you do not incur any damages during your stay, overstay your end date, or leave your room a mess when moving out.

If anything in your room is in disrepair or broken when you arrive, take note and let your HC know within the first few days. Your HC will help you document these items with your host family so the damage is not attributed to you when you move out.

Damage Deposit is held until the end of Contract and can be applied towards any damages to the Host Family’s home or belongings, cleaning fees for your room, and towards any balance due on your Homestay Contract. Overstaying your Contract’s end date or time will result in a minimum $70/daily fee in addition to any paid Damage Deposit being forfeited.

Your Homestay Coordinator will contact you within 30 days of your departure from the homestay to arrange a refund per the above conditions. Two attempts will be made to contact you via email to arrange for the return of your Damage Deposit. Keep your contact information current with your Homestay Coordinator so you can easily be reached. After two attempts have been made with no response, you will be responsible to contact your Homestay Coordinator.

Refunds are issued via check or Chase QuickPay. We will require you to confirm the correct spelling of your name and address that you wish the check to be mailed to. Reissued checks due to incorrect address or name spelling will incur a $35 reissuance fee. Damage Deposits are refundable for up to 12 months after your Homestay Contract end date and departure from the homestay.

**Firearms and Weapons**

In the United States, it is legal for individuals who have the proper license and training to purchase and possess firearms. Host families are required to keep any firearms, weapons and ammunition in a secure and locked area where they are not accessible by the student. Students are not authorized to operate or handle firearms, weapons, or participate in any hunting or gun related activity. In addition, students are not permitted to purchase firearms or weapons while they reside in the Host Family’s home.

**Photo Release**

MIF may use photographs of MIF Homestay Program participants in educational publications or in general media releases on a controlled basis. Any photographs used will highlight the student demonstrating positive interaction with their Host Family or participating in approved MIF activities. Photographs with or without identification may be used for any lawful purpose in all manner of print, digital publications and/or advertising that is consistent with the values of MIF.

**Program Feedback Survey**

At the conclusion of your homestay, please go to our website to complete a Program Feedback Survey. There will be sections that cover your satisfaction level with your Homestay, Host Family, and MIF and also a place to offer suggestions on future Programs. We appreciate you completing this form so that we can always be improving our Programs.
Additional Resources

Books about American Culture:

Books about Crossing Cultures:

Helpful Websites:
- ACSI Website: www.acsi.org
- Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/travel
- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs: www.travel.state.gov/visa

CONCLUSION

Living in a Homestay is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about the United States. It is a cultural experience for students as well as Host Families. We hope that this culture-sharing produces friendships and memories that will never be forgotten.
MIF Rules of Conduct

Outlined below is a general summary of the terms of your Homestay Contract which you or your parent/agent entered into on your behalf. You must comply with these rules at all times in order to remain as a MIF Homestay Program Participant. If you have any questions about your Contract, the homestay or this Handbook, ask your Homestay Coordinator right away. We are always happy to help you!

Questions about Homestay or Host Family Rules? Ask your Host Family, Homestay Coordinator, or Agent

1. **Cooperation:** Students must make every effort to cooperate and communicate with MIF staff including office staff, regional staff, and area representatives. MIF Homestay Coordinators are trained to work with the students to help provide the best possible homestay experience. The Coordinator’s efforts can be severely limited by lack of student cooperation with MIF’s decisions and advice.

2. **Communication:** If you experience a problem during your homestay, you should contact your Homestay Coordinator or the MIF office right away as this is the first step toward resolving any issues that may arise. If you don’t speak up, we won’t know how to help you. You are required to respond to communication from your Homestay Coordinator and/or the MIF office in a timely manner.

3. **Participation:** Students must make every effort to become involved as a family member in their Host Family by participating in family activities and events, completing household chores, and adapting to the lifestyle of the Host Family. The efforts of the student to integrate into the family as a family member will largely determine the success or failure of the homestay experience.

4. **Respect and Compliance:** Students must treat all members of the Host Family (including pets) with due respect. Students must comply with their Host Family in all areas, including family participation, curfew, household chores, household rules, etc. This respect and compliance should be maintained as long as it does not threaten the student’s health and welfare.

5. **Courtesy:** Show courtesy towards your Host Family by talking and engaging with them. Your Host Family wants to get to know you and learn about your culture! Do not worry about making errors with your English as your Host Family will be happy that you are trying. Students should make eating dinner with their Host Family a priority and be willing to try new foods.

6. **Speaking English:** English should be the primary language spoken in the host home. This applies to both Host Family and Students. Your Host Family may limit or restrict the use of any language other than English in their home. This is for your benefit and theirs.

7. **Meals (if booked):** If you have booked meals, they will be outlined on your Contract. If booked, dinner is served primarily family-style while breakfast and lunch are self-prepared meals. Ask your host to show you how to use the kitchen and any necessary appliances to avoid damaging anything.

8. **Eating in the bedroom:** You are not allowed to have or store any food or beverages in your bedroom unless your Host Family gives permission to do so. Food and drinks will draw pests.

9. **Electronics:** Students are not allowed to use the Host Family’s telephone, computer(s), or other electronics without their express permission.

10. **Cleaning/Tidiness:** Students are required to keep their bedroom clean and must clean up after themselves in the bathroom and common areas of the home. Students must clean up after themselves in the kitchen after preparing or eating food.

11. **Household Chores:** Students may be assigned additional household chores such as taking out the trash, cleaning common areas and the bathroom. Chores must be completed on time according to the schedule provided by the Host Family.

12. **Personal Hygiene:** Students are required to maintain good personal hygiene according to American standards: shower and brush teeth daily and do laundry weekly.

13. **House Safety and Common Sense:** You must turn off lights and other electric devices such as heaters and fans when leaving a room to conserve energy and prevent electric hazards. You must lock the house doors and bedroom windows when leaving the house. You must be careful to not lose the house key provided to you by your Host Family. Lost keys may incur fees to you.

14. **Visitors:** Students must ask their Host Family for permission prior to inviting friends to the house. Visitors are not permitted to stay overnight in the Homestay. The Homestay is only for guests who have an active Homestay Contract.

15. **Household Damage:** Students are financially responsible for any intentional or unintentional damage they cause to the Host Family home or belongings. If a student damages anything they must tell the Host Family right away. At the conclusion of the homestay, students must leave the bedroom clean and in the same order that it was when they arrived.

16. **Internet:** You may not download illegal or inappropriate content using your Host Family’s internet service. Your Host Family has the authority to restrict or revoke internet privileges if you are not using the internet responsibly.

17. **Host Family Personal Information:** The Host Family’s personal information such as address and phone number is private and may not be shared with others.

18. **Spending Money:** Students are responsible to purchase all personal items (toiletries, snacks, cell phone plan, clothes, etc.). Host Families are not permitted to lend money to students or purchase these items for them nor should students lend money to Host Families for any reason. If the student joins the Host Family in an activity or outing, the student is responsible for his/her own tickets, entrance fees, and purchases.

19. **Academics:** Students are solely responsible for their grades and academic performance. Host families support the students but are not held responsible for the efforts or lack thereof that the student puts forth in their academic performance.

20. **School Attendance:** Students enrolled in K-12 school are responsible to attend school every day it is in session unless excused by a doctor’s note or the Host Family. Host Families will make every effort to facilitate the student’s school attendance and students are required to
cooperate with the Host Family for this requirement. School attendance is mandatory in the United States. Too many absences may result in expulsion from the high school and dismissal from your homestay.

21. **Host Family Change/Student Moves:** Students must follow MIF policy for requesting a host family move and are not allowed to move themselves to a new Host Family. If a move from one Host Family to another is warranted, the student’s Homestay Coordinator will select and screen a new family prior to the student move. If a student moves him or herself to a new Host Family, they will be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the Program. Students making false accusations or creating problems to try and “force a move” will be disciplined accordingly, up to being dismissed from the program.

22. **Homestay Payments & Extensions:** Homestay payments are submitted to MIF only and never directly to the Host Family. Any communication regarding money or Contract terms must go through the Homestay Coordinator and not be discussed directly with the Host Family. If you wish to extend your homestay or return to your Host Family at a later date, you must make these arrangements with the Homestay Coordinator and never directly with your Host Family.

23. **Other Homestay Guests:** Host families are not restricted from accepting additional guests, international or otherwise, during the homestay and, if they do so, this will not affect the services the Student has booked in their Homestay Contract.

24. **Travel:** Students are required to follow the Travel Protocol outlined in the Handbook. In order for a Minor student to travel without their Host Family, MIF must have a signed Travel Authorization form on file. Minor students are only allowed to travel to and from the United States and their home country without a Travel Authorization form.

25. **Transportation:** Your Host Family will provide transportation as outlined in your Homestay Contract. Your Host Family is not obligated to provide additional rides that have not been previously booked. If you would like your Host Family to provide transportation for an errand or social event you must request a ride from them in advance. If they are unable to provide a ride you are responsible to arrange and pay for a taxi, rideshare, or carpooling with friends.

26. **Sports/Extracurricular Activities Transportation:** If you wish to join a sport or extracurricular activity and receive transportation from your host family, you must contact your Homestay Coordinator to negotiate additional transportation not listed on your Homestay Contract before joining the sport/activity. If your Host Family is unable to drive you, you are responsible to arrange carpooling with friends or pay for a taxi, rideshare, or public transit.

27. **Driver’s License:** Students are not allowed to drive their Host Family’s vehicle(s). MIF and the Host Family cannot sign on behalf of a student in order for him/her to enroll in driving school to obtain a driver’s license or permit. Students who wish to obtain a driver’s license must be at least 18 years of age. Students are responsible for all related costs including driver’s training, license tests, driver’s insurance, purchasing a vehicle, maintenance, storage of the car when away from the U.S., etc. Students who own a vehicle must obtain written host family permission before registering their vehicle to the Host’s home address (such as for insurance purposes).

28. **Illness and Emergencies:** Tell your Host Family right away if you feel ill. They will help you determine whether any treatment is needed. If there is an emergency such as a fire or life threatening injury call 911 for assistance from emergency personnel.

29. **Health Insurance:** Students are required to obtain and maintain valid health insurance throughout their Homestay. Proof of valid health insurance must be provided to MIF upon request. Students are responsible to pay for any and all medical appointments and should be prepared to make payment at time of appointment.

30. **Passport & Visa:** Students are required to maintain a valid and current passport and visa throughout the duration of the Homestay.

31. **Alcohol:** Minor Students are not allowed to possess, consuming or purchasing alcoholic beverages. The legal age to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages in the United States is 21. Any possession, purchase or consumption under this age constitutes breaking the state and federal law. Students of legal drinking age must abide by Host Family rules regarding alcohol possession or consumption in the homestay.

32. **Tobacco Products:** Minor students are not allowed to purchase, possess, or use tobacco products. The legal age to purchase tobacco products is 18 or 21 (depending on the city) in the United States. Students are never allowed to smoke inside the house and may only smoke outside with the permission of their Host Family.

33. **Illegal Use of Drugs:** Students are not allowed to purchase, possess, or use illegal drugs. Unauthorized use of controlled and/or illegal drugs is against the law in all states in the United States. Prescription drugs issued to the student by a qualified medical professional would be considered the only authorized form of drug use.

34. **Firearms & Weapons:** Students are not authorized to operate, handle, or purchase firearms, weapons or anything that resembles a weapon throughout the duration of the Homestay.

35. **Government Laws:** Students must abide by the laws of the United States on federal, state, and local levels. This includes curfew laws which may be established by individual communities. International students are expected to abide by all laws governing American citizens. Failure to abide by any law could result in legal action and/or arrest or detainment.

36. **False Claims or Accusations:** Students found making false or exaggerated claims against their host family or MIF representatives will face disciplinary action in accordance with the MIF Disciplinary Policy, up to being dismissed from the program. Additionally, students may face legal action for these false or damaging accusations.

37. **Homestay Contract/Dates:** The dates on your Homestay Contract were finalized when you, or your representative/parent signed the Contract. If you move out or choose to leave your homestay early, the Cancellation Policy does not allow refunds of unused homestay services fees.
MIF Homestay
Contact Information

**Mailing Address**
My International Family  
4403 W Lawrence Ave, Suite 209  
Chicago, IL 60630

**Email**
General Inquiries  info@myinternationalfamily.com  
Payment Inquires  accounting@myinternationalfamily.com

**Telephone and Fax**
MIF Main Office  +1-312-674-7117  
Toll Free  +1-866-440-5771  
Fax Line  +1-312-674-7643  
24/7 Urgent Care Line  +1-312-508-0569

**MIF Website and Social Media**
Website  myinternationalfamily.com  
facebook.com/mifhomestay  
instagram.com/mifhomestay  
twitter.com/mifhomestay

Please reference updated information on our website www.MyInternationalFamily.com