



HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK

Overview of Study Six

Study Six was founded in 2020 as an organization committed to providing educational opportunities for international students in the U.S. Our mission is to inspire people to step beyond their comfort zones, fostering meaningful relationships and transformative experiences. We believe true growth happens when you embrace the unfamiliar. It might be a student choosing to study abroad, a parent encouraging their child to take that leap, or a host family welcoming a new guest into their home. Our dedicated staff strives to create a positive exchange experience for all program participants.

Inquiries

Please email info@studysix.com.

Payment of Monthly Stipend

Monthly stipends will be disbursed at the end of each month. If your payment details change, please notify us promptly so we can update your information.

Host families are reminded:

- Do not negotiate payments directly with your student or their natural family.
- Do not offer guardianship or legal power of attorney.
- Do not request additional funds from the student unless pre-approved by Study Six.

We are here to provide guidance and ensure a successful exchange experience for both host families and students. Please reach out to us for any questions or concerns.

Local Staff

Your local Study Six staff member serves as your primary contact and is responsible for supporting both students and host families. Our staff are trained professionals equipped to assist you throughout the program. Their responsibilities include:

- Promoting the International Program within the local community.
- Engaging with their high school community to facilitate student placements and identify any special school requirements.
- Coordinating with schools for written acceptance of students.
- Conducting home visits and interviews with potential host families.
- Organizing orientation sessions for students and host families to ensure a smooth transition.
- Monitoring student placement, host family dynamics, and school performance on a monthly basis.
- Acting as a mediator in case of conflicts between host families and students.

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, the student's host family must immediately report to their local Study Six staff member, or call the emergency line at (321) 503-5145:

- Student's name and country of origin.
- Nature of the illness or emergency.
- Address and telephone number where the student can be reached.
- Contact details of the attending physician.

Study Six will communicate with the student's natural family and international partner organizations regarding any emergencies.

Ensuring the safety of our students is our top priority. Emergency calls will be returned promptly; please refrain from calling outside office hours unless it is a genuine emergency. Kindly note that our office operates in the Eastern Standard time zone.

National Incident Response

In the event of a national crisis, Study Six will act swiftly and professionally to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. Immediate communication will be established with international partners and natural parents using all available communication methods.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is expected of the student?

Our students participate in an academic and cultural exchange program. They are required to attend and actively participate in all their classes while maintaining at least a "C" average in all their courses. Before departing for the U.S., students receive an orientation covering program rules, expectations, extra expenses, uniforms, sports, etc. This information is also sent to them in a pre-arrival pack. Students must obey all local, state, and federal laws and follow host family rules, including household responsibilities such as curfews, chores, and family activities.

What types of families are eligible to host?

We welcome a diverse range of host families, including single-parent households, families with children of any age, childless couples, retirees, and single individuals.

What are the benefits of hosting an exchange student?

Hosting a student is a rewarding experience that fosters cultural exchange and mutual learning. Families gain a deeper understanding of another culture while forming lifelong friendships with their student.

What happens if the student is ill or has an accident?

Students have comprehensive medical insurance. Each student is provided with an insurance card. Additional details about the insurance policy will be provided during the host family orientation.

How does the student manage personal expenses?

The student's natural parents provide an adequate allowance for personal expenses, including clothing, social activities, travel, school supplies, meals outside the home, and phone plan. Host families are not responsible for covering these expenses.

Are host families required to take students on trips?

There is no obligation to take students on vacations. However, if your family plans a trip, you are welcome to include your student. Travel expenses are the responsibility of the student.

What is the length of the program?

Most students arrive in August for a 10-month academic program and return to their home country in May/June. Some students may choose to extend their stay for the summer or continue for another year or more. Host families are not required to house students over the summer, but those interested should contact their local staff member for arrangements.

Host Family Responsibilities

Your primary role as a host family is to provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment for your student. While students will learn about American culture through school, friends, and community involvement, the most impactful learning will come from their daily experiences with your family. Below are key responsibilities and expectations:

- **Financial Responsibility:** Host families must be financially stable and may not receive government-subsidized income.
- **Transportation to and from the Airport:** Where possible, families should pick up their student upon arrival and return them to the airport for departure.
- **Meals:** Students must be provided with breakfast and dinner on school days, with lunch also provided on weekends/holidays. While host families are not required to make breakfast or lunch, appropriate food items should be readily available. Students should not be asked to contribute to grocery costs or purchase their own food or beverages. When dining out, it is the student's responsibility to pay for their own meal unless the family chooses to treat them, in which case expectations should be made clear. Frequent dining out should be minimized due to the student's financial limitations. Preparing meals at home and sharing mealtime fosters stronger family bonds.
- **Sleeping Arrangements:** Students may share a bedroom with another child of the same gender and similar age, but must be provided their own bed—cots are not acceptable. They must also have access to a quiet place to study, which may be in their bedroom.
- **Labor and Chores:** Students are not to be used as labor in exchange for hosting. They may not be asked to perform heavy yard work, remodeling, or care for young children or elderly family members. Normal household chores may be expected as part of family life.
- **Family Integration:** Hosting a student involves lifestyle changes, including providing supervision and integrating the student into daily family life. This may include enforcing rules, providing transportation to social events, and offering general support and guidance. Students are not guests—they are new family members.
- **Transportation for Activities:** Students often wish to participate in sports or extracurriculars. Families are encouraged to assist with transportation or help students find alternative options.
- **School Transportation:** Hosts are responsible for providing transportation to and from school. If hosts are interested in utilizing the school bus service, they should contact their local staff member for more information. If hosts opt to utilize the school bus service, the cost for this will be deducted from the monthly host stipend. Public transportation or taxis are not permitted.

- **Stipend Usage:** The monthly stipend is meant to offset hosting costs. It may not be used to pay rent, mortgage, or utilities and should not be relied upon as a source of income. Host families may not request money directly from the student or their family. Stipends are prorated and paid monthly by Study Six.
- **Personal Purchases:** Study Six does not reimburse host families for personal items purchased to accommodate a student, including beds, linens, or household supplies. Students are responsible for purchasing their own personal care items, such as shampoo, deodorant, skincare, etc.
- **Home Conditions:** Host families must provide a warm, safe living space. Rooms without central heating/cooling (where appropriate) are not acceptable. Students may not be charged for utilities, heaters, or other basic necessities. Hosts should ensure that students are not keeping rooms overly hot or cold, especially in homes with zoned heating or cooling.
- **Supervision:** Students may not be left home alone overnight. If travel is necessary, the host family must inform their local staff member, so that temporary accommodation can be organized. The stipend will be prorated for these nights and given to the temporary host.

Fostering a Positive Host-Student Relationship

The key to hosting is a combination of patience, love, and support. It is important that your student becomes a member of the family and not treated as a guest. Bonding with your student may not occur immediately, as it takes time for both you and your student to adjust. Eventually, your student will become part of your family. Here are some suggestions:

- Become actively involved in your student's life to develop a relationship of mutual respect and cooperation.
- Explain language differences, including American slang and cultural phrases, to help prevent misunderstandings.
- When making decisions about student participation in activities, consider whether you would allow your own child to do the same.
- Take an interest in your student's home country and customs to show that they are valued.
- Be flexible but firm. The more accepting you are, the more rewarding the cultural exchange experience will be.
- Set clear expectations regarding behavior and household responsibilities from the beginning.
- Encourage your student to participate in family and school activities to foster a sense of belonging.

Student Arrival and Cultural Adjustment

Preparing for Arrival

Before your student arrives, we recommend learning about their home country, culture, and traditions. Explore online resources such as travel documentaries, books, cookbooks, and online articles. Consider displaying a world map and highlighting your student's home country—it's a great conversation starter and a meaningful gesture.

Airport Welcome

It is important to arrive on time to greet your student at the airport. A warm welcome—including a sign with their name—can help ease initial nerves. Your student may be tired, anxious, or overwhelmed after a long journey, so be patient, speak slowly, and avoid asking too many questions right away. Encourage them to contact their natural family to confirm a safe arrival.

First Day at Home

Help your student get settled by explaining how to contact you during the day and posting important phone numbers in a visible spot. Outline family expectations early—many families post a basic list on the refrigerator. Don't overload your student with information; keep things simple at first.

Discuss meal routines and eating habits. While many students are excited to try American food, they may struggle with unfamiliar flavors or ingredients. Be open to learning about and incorporating some of your student's food preferences, especially if they are used to a more vegetable-forward or balanced diet.

Review your family rules and expectations openly. Address topics like daily routines, internet use, household chores, and phone etiquette. Clarity and consistency are key.

Student Adjustment and Culture Shock

Adjusting to a new culture takes time and patience. Expect both your student and your family to go through a period of transition. Culture shock—defined as anxiety and disorientation triggered by unfamiliar surroundings—often sets in after the initial excitement wears off.

Common symptoms of culture shock may include:

- Excessive sleeping
- Unexplained irritability or anger
- Weight gain or loss
- Depression or isolation

- Frequent criticism of American customs
- Homesickness or lack of communication

These behaviors can mimic typical teenage mood swings, but they often reflect deeper struggles. Your student may not have the words to express how they feel. Be patient, avoid taking things personally, and involve your local staff member if concerns persist.

Some students may believe that switching host families will solve their discomfort. However, criticism is often a defense mechanism—an attempt to affirm their identity and manage fear or insecurity. Stay calm, keep communication open, and encourage your student to engage in physical activity and social interactions. This can help ease their emotional adjustment.

Remind yourself and your student that becoming an international student is a major life experience, and it takes time to settle into a new rhythm. With consistent support and understanding, your student will find their footing and begin to thrive.

Homesickness and Cultural Differences

Homesickness

Homesickness is often closely tied to culture shock. While some students adapt to American life easily, others may struggle. Even if your student is prepared for these feelings, your support can make a big difference. Involve them in your daily routines—go for a walk, cook a meal together, or work on a household project. Most importantly, be present and patient.

Avoid feeling guilty if your student seems unhappy—it's a natural part of adjustment. However, if your student remains depressed or withdrawn for an extended period, contact your local staff member for guidance.

Excessive phone calls from natural parents can unintentionally prolong homesickness. Speaking to family often makes students feel more disconnected. Encourage them to limit calls home to once or twice a week. If calls from natural parents become too frequent or disruptive, please communicate this to your local staff member.

Holidays can be especially difficult for exchange students. Involve them in your celebrations and invite them to share their own traditions and customs. This exchange helps foster connection and ease feelings of homesickness.

Cultural Differences

Navigating cultural differences is one of the more challenging yet rewarding aspects of the exchange experience. Awareness can prevent misunderstandings before they escalate.

- **Views on Sexuality:** Attitudes toward sexuality differ widely by culture. Some students come from open environments, while others are used to more privacy. Be clear about what is acceptable in your home and community.
- **Supervision and Safety:** Some students may not understand why American host parents closely monitor their whereabouts. Explain that this is a safety measure, and just as their natural parents would want to know where they are, so do you.
- **Political Viewpoints:** Students come from a variety of backgrounds; some very liberal backgrounds and others from very conservative environments. Be open to their points of view and refrain from being overly critical of one viewpoint or another.
- **Religious Observations:** Some students may wish to practice religious or cultural traditions. As hosts, you are not expected to participate in such practices, but should be respectful of students in this regard.

Communication

Students should be treated with the same expectations and privileges as your own children. While they may act mature and independent at times, they are still teenagers and will test boundaries, seek approval, and need guidance—just like any other adolescent.

Language may be a temporary barrier. Your student may speak English well but still need time to adjust to regional accents or idioms. They may nod or say “yes” even if they don’t fully understand. Repeat important information and don’t hesitate to clarify multiple times.

One of the first questions your student may have is how to address you. Let them know what you’d prefer to be called—“Mom,” “Dad,” or by your first names. Clarity will reduce anxiety and help your student feel more at home.

Frequent reminders about household rules and expectations are normal and necessary. Your student is learning how your family works, and a little patience goes a long way toward helping them succeed.

Student Rules, Disciplinary Procedures, and Transitions

Student Program Rules

As part of enrollment in the International Program, parents are required to sign Terms and Conditions. Students are expected to abide by school and program policies throughout their experience.

Counseling and Problem Solving

If a student struggles to follow house rules, school expectations, or experiences significant culture shock or disciplinary issues, our staff and the school will provide counseling.

In cases where issues persist, the student may be placed on probation. Probation is a formal trial period during which the student is expected to demonstrate specific improvements. A Probation Letter will outline the expectations and time frame for improvement. This letter must be signed by the student. Refusal to sign may result in immediate dismissal from the program. The letter is translated and shared with the natural family by our foreign partner office.

Students are not permitted to request a new host family simply because they are unwilling to follow household rules. We do not facilitate host family changes for students on probation unless warranted by exceptional circumstances. If a student on probation must leave the host home, we will evaluate the situation to determine whether the student should be reassigned or dismissed.

Please address concerns or conflicts with your local staff member early, before issues escalate. If your local staff member is unavailable, contact hello@studysix.com for assistance.

Grounds for Dismissal

A student may be dismissed from the International Program for the following reasons:

- Failure to comply with probation expectations
- Poor academic performance with no effort to improve
- Diagnosed psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression, psychosis)
- Diagnosed eating disorders (e.g., anorexia, bulimia)
- Unauthorized travel or visits from natural family members
- Major life decisions, such as religious conversion or marriage
- Expulsion from school
- Inability to adapt to American family life despite warnings or probation
- Violation of school policies

Immediate dismissal will occur if a student:

- Uses, sells, or possesses illegal substances
- Is caught drinking and a police report is filed
- Breaks a national, state, or local law

We are committed to supporting students and giving them every opportunity to succeed. If issues arise, we work closely with host families and students to find solutions. If you observe behavioral or attitudinal problems, please contact us right away.

Host Family Rules

Students are expected to follow all household rules. Violations may lead to probation, and failure to meet probation expectations may result in dismissal and possible termination of the student's visa.

Local staff are your first line of support. If conflicts persist, the School Counselor may become involved to mediate unresolved concerns. Our goal is not to send students home, but to help them learn and grow through real-life challenges.

We appreciate your collaboration in working with our local staff to ensure each student has a successful and meaningful exchange experience.

Religion

Discuss your family's religious practices openly. Encourage your student to attend at least one service or activity to decide if they would like to participate further. If religion is part of your regular family routine, you are welcome to invite your student to join.

Note: Some private schools may require students to follow certain practices or attend religious services. Students attending such schools agree to these conditions upon enrollment and are therefore expected to participate.

Moving a Student

We understand that not all challenges can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. If ongoing issues cannot be resolved, a student may need to be moved—either at your request or the student's. In such cases, the local staff member must be involved. Students cannot leave, and host families cannot ask students to leave, without first consulting their local staff.

We will make every effort to find a new placement as quickly as possible. However, we ask for your patience and cooperation, and that you continue hosting the student until an alternative placement is secured.

Insurance and Financial Responsibilities

Insurance

Students are covered by insurance that includes accidents, illness and emergency dental care. Routine physical exams, immunizations, and sports physicals are not covered. These expenses are the responsibility of the natural family.

You are not responsible for your student's medical bills. Do not agree to guarantee payment for any medical services. You are authorized to approve treatment, but billing should be handled by the student and their insurance provider. The responsible party for payment should be listed as the student's natural parent.

We provide an affordable group insurance option. If your student is enrolled in this plan, we can assist with claims. If your student has a different policy, please refer directly to that provider for guidance.

Upon arrival, ask your student for their insurance documents and make copies for your records. Note the policy number and provider contact information. Always carry this information when seeking medical care.

If your student needs medical treatment:

- Always ask for an itemized bill
- Ensure you have the correct insurance form completed
- Do not pay the bill yourself—students must follow the claim process
- Do not use your address as the billing address. Please use the student's home address. If this is not accepted by the provider, use the school's address, "ATTN Study Six".

Student Financial Responsibilities

Host families are not financially responsible for students' personal expenses or damages caused by willful or negligent behavior. Students are expected to bring personal spending money, typically \$400–\$600 per month, provided by their natural family.

Financial boundaries should be clear:

- Students must not borrow money from the host family
- Students are responsible for their own phone, and personal care products
- Host families must not co-sign or open joint bank accounts with students
- Students must pay for meals outside the home unless otherwise agreed upon

Most students arrive with debit or international cards. Test these early to ensure functionality.

Students should not carry large amounts of cash and should safeguard their belongings. If you have concerns about your student's finances, contact your local staff member.

Students are financially responsible for:

- Cell phones and service (no host family phone contracts)
- Personal electronics (e.g. laptops)
- Toiletries and other personal items
- Transportation outside what is provided by the host family
- Meals outside the home
- Any damages or lost items caused by negligence

School Expectations and Student Travel

School Requirements and Participation

Students must follow school regulations, and final enrollment decisions are at the discretion of each school administrator.

While students may *hope* to:

- Enroll as seniors
- Graduate
- Take driver's education
- Participate in varsity sports

We cannot guarantee participation in any of these activities. These decisions are made solely by school officials.

Academic Expectations: Students are required to:

- Attend school regularly and on time
- Maintain at least a "C" average in all classes
- Take a courseload that mirrors that of an American student
- Follow all school rules and policies
- Be able to understand and complete coursework in English. Students with lower-level English will be enrolled in our ESL (English as a Second Language) Program for up to two years.

If the school reports serious behavioral, academic, or attendance issues, the student may be placed on probation, and if issues persist, expelled—which will result in dismissal from the program.

Student Travel Policies

Travel is permitted under the following conditions:

- Students may travel with their host family, school, church group, or other organized trips supervised by adults
- Teen-only trips are not permitted
- Written natural parent permission is required for trips involving flights or overnight stays. Students or hosts should complete a Travel Request Form, which can be obtained from their local staff member.
- Inform your local staff member of all travel plans at least two weeks in advance
- Travel during school hours must be approved by the school

Visits from natural parents are strongly discouraged during the first semester of the program. If parents plan to visit, this should occur during the last month of the student's stay, and they must arrange their own accommodations—host families are under no obligation to house them.

Student Departure and Post-Program Extensions

Departure

Students must return to their home country within 7 days of the end of the school year. Most return flights are booked by the natural family or their agency.

Host families should:

- Confirm return travel arrangements at least one month in advance
- Not assume responsibility for booking or modifying student flights

If delays (e.g., flight cancellations) occur, we will work with the host family to arrange a temporary extension. Any additional costs or rebooking fees are the responsibility of the student and their natural family.

Students may not remain in the U.S. for an extended period unless it has been approved by Study Six and properly reported for visa compliance.

Extensions and Private Arrangements

We do not support private arrangements for students to return to the host family outside the program.

Why?

- There is no support or mediation if problems arise
- Families receive no stipend from Study Six
- Host families become solely responsible for all logistics and expenses

If your student or their natural family suggests such an arrangement, report it to your local staff member immediately. These situations are not permitted under program policy.

A Final Word

We look forward to the year ahead and thank you for your role in making this program a success. As a host family, you are the cornerstone of the experience, and your commitment is deeply appreciated.

The year ahead will bring both challenges and rewarding moments—for your family and for the young person you are preparing to welcome into your home. Your patience, guidance, and generosity create lasting impacts that extend far beyond a single school year.

Thank you for opening your heart and home to this journey.