



INTERNATIONAL Student Exchange

Sharing Lives...Sharing Worlds



Student Handbook

About ISE

ISE is an organization that provides enriching educational and inter-cultural experiences for students from all over the globe by offering them the opportunity to study and learn abroad. Because our company is global in structure and varied in culture, the efforts of our staff are separated into

several different categories:

Area Representatives:

Area Reps arrange for your stay in the host home, secure permission for you to attend school, and are available to offer help and support. They will assist you with any problems that may arise. You will be in contact with your Area Rep on a monthly basis, but you may request a meeting at any time. In accordance with monitoring your adjustment to living abroad, your Area Rep will also contact the school to check on your progress and report back to the New York Office with a written report on a regular basis. If you or your host family do not hear from your Area Rep within the first two weeks of arrival, notify the NY Office by calling 1 (800) 766-4656.

Host Families:

Our host families willingly open their hearts and homes to provide you with room, board, and a loving atmosphere. Host families are volunteers and receive no pay. They go through a series of background checks, orientations and interviews, ensuring they are able to rise to the task of hosting a student. Working closely with the Area Rep, your host family will enroll you in school, guide you through living in the U.S., and support you throughout your program. They are your second family and they are there to help.

School:

Your school allows you to attend classes as a guest of the United States government with a U.S. Exchange Visitor's Visa. The school has the right to administer its own policies regarding graduation, diplomas, and sports participation; as a guest you are expected to follow these policies. The school may also require extra fees. We will do our best to inform you of these fees; however, there may be some fees we are unaware of that must be paid directly to the school.

Regional Advisors, Managers, Directors:

Regional Advisors and Managers oversee Area Reps and also work directly with schools and host families. They are available to assist you or your host family with any concerns. Be sure to contact your Regional Manager if you cannot reach your Area Rep.

New York Office:

If your natural family has a question or concern, they should contact your international agency. The agent will contact the New York office to seek a solution. Only the New York office should have contact with the international agent. The staff will communicate any questions your natural parents may have. The New York Office is available for emergency situations. ISE has student service counselors available to help students and host families resolve any problems. The toll free number is 1 (800)-766-4656.



You can find guidelines and information from the US Department of State (D.O.S) for J-1 visa participants at <http://j1visa.state.gov>. You can also reach the D.O.S. helpline by calling 1-866-283-9090. If you did not receive the welcome letter from the D.O.S. and information regarding the William Wilberforce Trafficking victims act, it can also be found on the website.

Dear ISE student

Welcome to the USA! We hope you enjoy the many new experiences you are sure to encounter throughout your program. Living and studying abroad will provide you with the opportunity to learn from a new culture and perspective. We hope that you will share your culture with your host family and the people you meet.

Please take a moment now to find and record this important information so that you will have it available to you when you need it.

My Area Representative:

phone: _____

e-mail: _____

My Regional Manager:

phone: _____

e-mail: _____

International Student Exchange Headquarters in NY: 1-800-766-4656

Local Police: _____. You can always call 911 in case of emergency as well.

Closest urgent care facility: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Ask your host family to help you find a doctor that accepts your insurance and write their contact information here.

Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Insurance ID number: _____

Register your insurance now at <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance/>

Please note: The DS2019 form that you received prior to your arrival is a very important document that should be kept with your passport. Make sure to keep it safe even after your program has ended as it may be required for any future visa applications.

TOP 5 WAYS TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

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1. Get involved with school and community activities.
 2. Stay positive, keep an open mind and try new things!
 3. Be respectful of your host family, school, and community.
 4. Be social and friendly... smile!
 5. Be an active member of your host family.

YOU'VE MADE IT THIS FAR... **DON'T** GET SENT HOME EARLY

Every year, a number of students are dismissed from the program as a direct result of their own actions. The five items below are the most common reasons for early dismissal.

TOP 5 REASONS FOR DISMISSAL

1. Alcohol or Drug Use
2. Disrespectful or Inappropriate Behavior
3. Failing Grades or Expulsion from School
4. Independent Travel
5. Arrest or Citation by Law Enforcement

Rules and Regulations

There are a number of rules and regulations that are important for you to know and understand. These rules and regulations will be outlined here and discussed during your orientation. The five rules below are grounds for immediate termination from the program and should be taken very seriously. While you may encounter American students who disregard these rules, the consequences for students on an exchange program are much greater. Unfortunately, each year there are a handful of students who do not take these rules seriously and are sent home. Do not become one of them! These are not the only actions that may warrant a program termination, but they are the most common.

1. Alcohol, tobacco and drug use is strictly prohibited

All local, state and federal laws apply. It is illegal for minors to purchase or consume alcohol in the U.S.

If you are caught using alcohol or illegal substances by the police, your host family, or other authorities you will be sent home. This not only includes the use of illegal drugs, but also the abuse of prescription drugs and tobacco.

2. Disrespectful and inappropriate behavior

Disrespectful or threatening comments that are made in person or electronically, as well as any physical altercations with host family members or peers will be taken very seriously and can lead to dismissal. Inappropriate behavior including sexting can also lead to dismissal.

3. Failing grades or expulsion from school

It is important to learn the school rules and to follow them. Be sure to be respectful of your teachers or administrators and maintain at least a "C" average in all academic courses. You may be removed from the program for failing grades regardless of whether the school expels you.

4. Independent Travel

Students may only travel with their host family, Area Rep, school, approved youth group or MPD Tours.

5. Arrest or citation by law enforcement

Any arrest or violation of US law is grounds for termination.



**KNOW THE
RULES!**

Rules and Regulations

The program rules outlined here may result in termination or disciplinary action depending on the severity of the infraction. Failure to abide by these rules and regulations will place your program at risk.



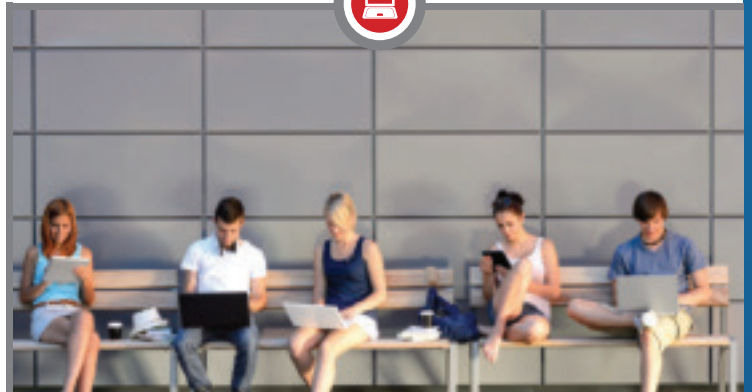
Engagement with your host family

- The ISE high school program is a cultural exchange between students from abroad and volunteer host families in the United States. It is called an exchange because there is an exchange of experience between host families and students. Each student on the program is expected to participate as a family member and share their lives, cultures, and experiences with their host families.
- Do not spend the majority of your time alone in your room.
- Be respectful of all host family rules. If you have a concern about any rule or are having any trouble, contact your Area Rep.



Cell Phones and International Calling

- As a host family member you must abide by the host family's rules regarding phone use in their home.
- You should not use the host family's phone for long distance calling.
- Speaking with friends and family from home excessively is time that you could be spending with your host family or new friends and can make it harder to adjust on the program. We recommend that students contact their natural families once a week.
- Inappropriate text messages or photos exchanged on your cell phone may be grounds for termination.
- Cell phone usage in school is usually prohibited in the U.S. Familiarize yourself with the regulations at your school.



Computer and Internet Usage

Improper use of the Internet is a serious violation. This includes, but is not limited to, the downloading or viewing of pornographic material, improper or offensive information, and violent content. 'Sexting,' or sending nude photos of yourself or anyone else via text or e-mail is considered child pornography and illegal in many states.

- Modifying or tampering with your host family or school computer equipment in any way is unacceptable. This includes downloading programs, music, photos, changing settings, or deleting files.
- Students will be responsible for any and all damages and costs incurred by improper use.



Rules and Regulations



Life Changing Activities

- You may NOT engage in intimate sexual activity while on the ISE program.
- Tattoos, body piercing, changing religions, marriage, or any "life changing" actions are prohibited.



Personal Finances

- Students are required to have \$300 for personal expenses each month for the duration of the program.
- Do not borrow from or loan money to your host family or friends. Never give your pin numbers, debit or credit cards to anyone.
- You should not expect your host family to purchase personal items such as toiletries, medication, specialty food or snacks (e.g. organic, gluten free, vegetarian), phone cards or plans, school supplies or clothing.
- Do not bring excessive amounts of cash with you. You should not bring more than \$300. Your bank debit card will most likely work in the U.S. For a small fee you can take out cash as you need it.
- You are not responsible for contributing any money toward host family bills such as electric, heat, gasoline or internet.

Operating a Motor Vehicle and Driver Education

- Operating a motor vehicle is strictly prohibited.
- You may attend a school sponsored Driver's Education program if the requirements can be met within the guidelines listed below. You may only operate the driver's education car during the course.
- You must have permission to participate in Driver's Education from your host family. It is important that you do not pressure your host family if their answer is no.
- You are responsible for paying all costs related to participation.
- In most states, you will not be able to obtain a license because you will be unable to accrue the amount of driving hours necessary without driving the host family vehicle.



Travel

- Travel home is not allowed. Special permission may be granted through the NY office in the case of death of an immediate family member.
- You may not travel out of the local area without an approved representative or adult host family member.
- You may travel on day trips to nearby cities and attractions (malls, recreational areas, etc.) with your host family's permission.
- If you will be traveling out of the country with your host family or approved trip, you will need to send your original DS-2019 form to the NY office along with a self addressed, stamped envelope that will be returned to you with a signature that is required for re-entry to the US.
- You may only travel independently after your program has ended.

Rules and Regulations



Community Service

- Students are required to complete 5 hours of community service while on the program.
- This can be accomplished through school clubs, youth groups, your host family or other community groups.



Visits from Natural Family or Friends

- Visits from natural family or friends are not allowed. While it's normal to miss your family, visits are highly disruptive to your program and often lead to greater problems.
- Additionally, you are not allowed to travel with natural family members or friends during the program.



Making Changes or Extending your Program

- If you are a Fall semester student and wish to extend your program, you must receive approval from your Area Rep, school, and host family.
- Students are required to remain on the program until the final day of school.



YOUR FAMILY

Consider Yourself a Part of the Family

- It is a good idea to start your program by sitting down for a family meeting with your host parents to discuss house rules and expectations.
- Listen to the suggestions of your host family. They are working with your best interests in mind. They know the area you live in, and they can work with your Area Rep to solve problems.
- You will be asked to do chores such as cleaning your room and helping out around the house. Do not wait to be asked; volunteer to help with household responsibilities.
- Your host family may be very different from

your family at home. They will likely have different rules or manners from what you are accustomed. Do not argue with your host family over chores or rules. If you have a problem that can't be solved by having a respectful discussion, contact your Area Rep.

- Obey house rules, including those regarding curfews, phone, email and Internet usage, and scheduling.
- It is important to ask permission to go out with friends. Make sure your host parents are informed of your whereabouts.
- Be respectful of everyone's privacy and property.

Rules and Regulations



With Your Friends

- Ask what the expectations of your host family are before you have friends over.
- Let your host family know when and where you are going at all times.
- Ask your host family before you plan your own schedule to avoid conflicts.
- Do not assume that people will take you where you want to go; ask first.
- Inform your host family when your plans change.



Church and Family Activities

- We encourage all students to attend church services and activities with their host families. Though it may be different than what you are accustomed to, faith is an important aspect in the lives of many American families. Part of the exchange experience is learning about the customs and traditions that are celebrated in your host family home. It is important to always be respectful.
- Youth group activities are often geared toward socialization rather than worship. Youth groups are great places to make friends.
- Talk to your Area Rep if you have concerns of any kind.



Family Challenges

- You are expected to remain with the family that you are placed with.
- It is your obligation to adjust to the family.
- If you are having trouble, your Area Rep is the first person you should contact. Your Area Rep is trained to help resolve problems between students and host families. It is not appropriate to discuss your host family with other members of the community and speaking with your natural family can often create a more stressful situation since they are so far away.
- It is our policy to make every effort to work through problems before considering a relocation. If a change in family is deemed necessary you may be relocated in your current community or a new location at the discretion of ISE. You may be responsible for any related costs associated with the move.
- Failure to adjust to the program under reasonable circumstances may be grounds for dismissal from the program.



Holidays and Special Items

Holidays away from home may cause you to miss your family, but it can be a special time for you and your host family. If you become homesick, share your feelings with your host family or Area Rep.

Rules and Regulations



YOUR SCHOOL



School Rules and Expectations

- Follow all school rules and regulations as they are outlined in the school handbook. If you have a hard time understanding the rules ask a teacher, school official, host family or your Area Rep to explain them to you.
- Go to school every day that school is in session. This is a U.S. government law and a visa requirement.
- You can be suspended or expelled from school for missing classes without permission.
- Tardiness to class is not allowed and will be addressed formally by the ISE program.
- You must treat teachers, officials, and other students with respect.

Graduation and Diplomas

- Students should not expect to graduate or receive a diploma. Each school has their own policy regarding exchange students.
- You may not disrupt the school with demands to graduate or receive a diploma. This issue may be addressed through disciplinary action by the ISE staff and can result in dismissal from school and the ISE program.



Grades and Convalidation

- ISE may dismiss you from the program for poor academic performance. You must maintain an overall "C" average in your academic classes.
- Exchange students are required to take U.S. History and English.
- DO NOT change classes without speaking to your Area Rep.
- ISE is not responsible for your convalidation process. This information should be provided by your agency in your home country.
- If you must convalidate your grades, it is your responsibility to know the requirements and deadlines. You must make the proper arrangements for documents to be mailed to you or the ISE home office if you return home before the process has been completed.

Sports and Clubs

- ISE does not promise that you will be able to participate in sports, groups, or clubs.
- You are encouraged to try new things. U.S. schools generally offer varied opportunities.
- When you become involved in a group or club, try to find alternate transportation to and from events.
- You are responsible for all fees and costs.



Overcoming Problems & Addressing Behaviors

How to Address Everyday Problems

Speak to your host family or Area Rep first. If there is an issue you feel the need to speak to your natural parents about, make sure your Area Rep has already been informed. If the problem cannot be solved locally, call your Regional Manager or the New York Office at (800) 766-4656.

ISE Process For Student Management



Problem Identification

At this stage your Area Rep will meet with you and/or your host family to discuss the issues at hand. A Problem Identification form will be completed and sent to ISE headquarters and your agency will be notified. The form includes a description of the issues from both you and your host family's perspective.



Problem Resolution

If a problem persists, your Area Rep will conduct another meeting that will be documented with a Problem Resolution form. Again, this form will be sent to ISE headquarters and your International Agent will be informed. This form will clearly define the issues to be resolved along with what you and your host family will do to improve the situation. If an issue has reached this level it means that other attempts to improve a situation have failed and it is time for you to take things more seriously.



Probation

Finally, the Probation sets strong guidelines for improving behavior. Failure to make the changes outlined in the probation may result in termination from the program. The Probation is signed by you, your Area Rep and Manager, and is approved by ISE headquarters.

*It is important to note that certain behavior may warrant a Problem Resolution, Probation, or even Termination level.

Student Health Insurance

What You Need to Know

You are provided with a **travel insurance policy, not a health insurance policy**. There are substantial differences between the two. A travel insurance policy covers a much smaller number of issues and excludes any pre-existing conditions.

Be prepared! Find a local doctor and urgent care provider that accepts the insurance. Go to the website <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance/> and log-in. Write down this information on the first page of this handbook so that you have it available when you need it. Print out your insurance ID card to bring with you to any healthcare provider.

Do not go to a hospital emergency room unless it is an actual emergency. If you need medical attention, it is best to go to an urgent care facility. For any non-emergency treatment, contact the health insurance company beforehand to find out if treatment will be covered.

Your host parents should never sign as guarantor. Give your natural parent's names and contact information for all paperwork.

Keep in Mind

Contact your area representative to let them know of any health issues.

If you are treated for an illness or injury, make sure that any financial obligations have been resolved before you return home. You can check the status of any pending claim by going to <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance>.

When you do visit a doctor, it is important that your bills are not in your host family's name.



Travel Insurance vs. Health Insurance

You are provided with a travel insurance policy that provides coverage for sudden accidents and illnesses. It does not cover any pre-existing conditions or many other things that you might normally expect a health insurance policy to cover like checkups, "normal" teen issues, physical therapy, counseling and many other issues. Please see the policy brochure at iseusa.org/insurance policy for more detailed information.

The main reason for this limited coverage is that the costs in the US healthcare systems are much greater than those outside the US. It would simply cost too much to offer a full coverage health policy. You may not realize that treatment here in the US costs much more! A simple visit to the doctor in Spain or Germany can be \$20-\$40. In the US, it may be \$100-\$200. Testing like x-rays, scans, or an overnight stay at the hospital can cost thousands of dollars that must be paid directly by you or your natural family.

Because of this limited coverage, it is especially important that any medical provider be made aware of any pre-existing condition you had before coming on the program. Often, the provider will modify their treatment or give only absolutely necessary treatment so that you are not left with a huge bill.

The Student Adjustment Process

Considering Cultural Differences

As an exchange student, you are both a guest of the United States and a student ambassador of your home country. You will no doubt notice the differences between American culture and your own. However, it is important to remember that these differences are not to be judged in terms of right or wrong, but simply the natural diversity that exists between people of different nations and backgrounds. Learn about your new family's lifestyle and teach them about yours. Take the time to discuss holidays, traditions, customs and values with your host family and peers. You may be surprised to find how much you have in common.

Overcoming Language Barriers

The easiest way to learn a new language is to use it at every available opportunity. Speak English constantly. Read books, watch movies and listen to music in English. Don't be too shy to ask if you don't understand, and look up the meaning of new words to expand your vocabulary.

Making American Friends

It will take time to make friends in a new country. Be bold and make the effort to introduce yourself to people. A great way to do this is to get involved in school clubs or sports early on. If there are other exchange students in your region, it can be great to talk with them about their adjustment process and your shared experiences, but it's important to make American friends as well.

This section describes some of the typical feelings that are experienced by students as they adjust to a different culture, family and way of life. You may relate to some of these feelings throughout your program. Adjusting to life in a new country, surrounded by a different culture and unfamiliar customs is a challenge for everyone. It is normal to experience stress, uncertainty and culture shock. It is important to ask for help. ISE staff can help with ideas and tools to help you overcome these problems. They are also able to collaborate with your school, host family and others in the community to help make your adjustment easier.

FIRST DAYS

- You feel tired, confused and may have difficulty understanding the language
- Try to rest, ask those around you to speak more slowly



II. GLORY DAYS

- You are beginning to understand more easily
- Happy you are making new friends
- Excited about new things
- School is interesting and challenging
- Continue to try to expand your vocabulary
- Get more involved in new activities in your school or community
- Try sports or activities that are not common in your home country
- Limit your communication home
- Discuss cultural differences with your host family

III. CULTURE SHOCK

- You feel frustrated with the differences between the U.S. and your home country
- School has become less challenging
- Interaction with your host family is not always positive (you are not treated as a 'guest' in the home, and may have disagreements with host family members)
- Try to refrain from making judgments
- Look for new challenges and activities and different ways to get involved in your community
- Talk to your host family and Area Rep



IV. FEELING DISSATISFIED

- You are wanting a deeper experience and thought your language skills would have been better by now
- You are frustrated with day to day activities
- You are more independent and may start to resent ISE and host family rules
- Try to resolve conflicts as they come up
- Think about your goals when you first began your program and assess whether you are on target to achieve them

V. ADJUSTING

- You feel comfortable
- Your language and communication skills have improved
- You feel less fatigue in dealing with culture
- You feel at ease with the living conditions and the program
- You are more integrated at school and relaxed at home
- Continue to try new things
- Find ways to remember your exchange experience (e.g. journaling, taking pictures)
- Take advantage of social events at school

VI. RETURN ANXIETY

- You feel anxiety over leaving new friends
- You feel that you have changed and are unsure how things will be when you return home
- You feel guilty for wanting to stay
- Make time to talk to people about how you feel
- Understand that your feelings are normal
- Plan future communications with your American family or friends
- Know that leaving does not mean 'goodbye forever'



Personal Safety

Preventing Sexual Abuse

While it is not common for students on the high school exchange program to become victims of sexual abuse, there are people that do think they can take advantage of international exchange students because they are unfamiliar with American customs and practices and are therefore vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Some Basic Facts

- Sexual contact between a high school student and any adult is NEVER appropriate. It is ILLEGAL for any adult to engage in sexual activity with a minor.
- You control your body. It is ALWAYS OK to say NO to ANYONE.
- If anyone intimidates, threatens or otherwise tries to coerce you into any unwanted sexual activity, contact ISE headquarters immediately, any time of the day or night at 1-800-766-4656. We are here to help you.
- Sexual abuse is never your fault.

Minimize Risks by Identifying Warning Signs

- An adult that wants to spend an unusual amount of time with you and always wants to be alone with you.
- An adult who touches you "accidentally" in an inappropriate way or who invades your personal space.
- Any situation where things "don't feel right".
- Situations where adults enter your bedroom or bathroom when you are dressing.
- Anytime someone promises you gifts, privileges, alcohol or drugs in exchange for sexual favors.
- Anytime someone, especially an adult, tells you to keep a secret about what he or she or you did.
- Anytime someone makes threats to make sure you "keep quiet" and tells you not to tell anyone to get help.
- Anytime you tell someone to stop the uncomfortable behavior and they refuse or ignore your wishes.
- Anytime someone blames you for his or her inappropriate behavior.
- If any of these early warning signs happen, even once, don't wait to see if they happen again. Share your concerns as soon as possible to help prevent or avoid abuse from happening or getting worse.

If you come to us you will not be sent home or blamed in any way. WE WILL HELP YOU. Talk with your Area Representative or ISE headquarters and we will help you work it out.

Examples of Abusive Sexual Behaviors That Are NOT Allowed:

- Unwanted touching, grabbing, pinching
- Being made to look at sexual pictures or videos on the Internet or in magazines
- Being forced to kiss someone or do something sexual
- Any request for sex by an adult
- Being watched while dressing or showering
- Being intentionally brushed up against or blocked



Safety Tips:

Important Tips to Follow:

- Never give your name, address, phone number, personal information or any pictures of yourself to anyone on the Internet.
- Anyone who writes something sexual in nature to a young person or sends sexual pictures is the kind of person who is known to hurt young people they meet online. Stop interaction with this person and tell someone.
- Never agree to meet with someone you meet on the internet.
- Always have a safe way home and make sure if you go anywhere with friends that you leave together. Make a plan with your host family to call them if you need a safe way home, no matter what.
- Avoid being alone with someone you just met. Do not remain alone with anyone who doesn't listen when

Pay Attention To Your Feelings:

Trust your feelings. If you are feeling uncomfortable or think "Uh-Oh, I hope this doesn't happen", then get away as soon as possible. Contact your Area Rep or ISE headquarters.

Things to report to your area representative or regional manager immediately:

- Unsafe or unsanitary living conditions
- If you have been offered alcohol or drugs
- Sexual misconduct



Case Studies



My name is Veronique from Belgium. I was so excited to come to the US, I had been dreaming about it for many years. When I got here though, it was really tough. You don't realize what it's going to be like to be away from everything familiar. I was crying almost everyday. Of course, I just wanted to talk to my parents and friends back home because I was feeling so bad. I didn't even want to go to school and I was pretty sure I just wanted to give up and go home. My parents were upset, but they didn't want to let me come home. They had spent so much money to send me here and they felt like I wasn't giving it a chance. I started talking to my Area Rep more. She was really nice and told me that even though it's hard, there were things I should try before giving up. She set up a meeting with my guidance counselor at school and I joined yearbook club and tennis. I'm not very good at tennis, but I was able to practice and hang out with the team and everyone was really nice. I don't think I could have made it, if I hadn't met new friends from Yearbook club and tennis. It didn't happen overnight but I slowly made more friends and had a lot more to keep me busy instead of thinking about how homesick I was. Now that I'm about to go home, I can't believe I actually thought of going home early. I love my host family and US friends so much and it's going to be really hard to say goodbye.

Hi, my name is Alessandro from Italy. Actually, I'm from Rome. You can imagine I'm used to life in the city. I knew I wanted to study in the US to improve my English and from what I saw on TV shows about American culture, I thought it would be fun. When I got my placement, I was a little shocked. It was a small town in Tennessee. A good friend of mine who was accepted on a program also, was placed in California, near LA. I was really upset. I thought it was going to be awful and all I could think about was how much fun my friend would have in LA. But, I decided to give it a try and I can't believe how it turned out. It's not that it was always easy. But, everyone was really friendly. They loved my accent which was really funny but I guess it helped me make friends right away. Since it was a small school I was able to be on the school Football team, even though I had never played before. When I would talk to my friend in California, he was actually jealous of me! He said his host family was nice, but he kind of got lost in the crowd at school. He was also really disappointed that he didn't make the soccer team.



My name is Seongwon from South Korea. I knew I wanted to come to the US to study and to improve my English, but I didn't really think about what it would be like to live with an American family. Things were really different from what I was used to. I don't have any brothers or sisters and at home, and my parents never really asked me what friends I would go out with or want to know where I would be all the time. I also never had chores in my house. I thought my host family was nice, but I couldn't get used to everything so quickly. I spent most of my time after school in my room. I just didn't feel like always being around the family. I wasn't trying to be rude, but I guess my host family thought I was. My Area Rep came over to meet with all of us. We talked about the rules and the chores, and spending more time together. I promised to try harder to hang out more with my younger brothers and to obey the house rules, and my family was able to understand a little more where I was coming from. They were more patient with me after the meeting and things actually did get better. We have a good time together now and we laugh a lot!



My name is Santiago from Ecuador. I've had a pretty good program so far here in Texas. I'm a starter on the school soccer team and we're doing really well. There was only one incident that happened that could have been really bad. I was at party with my teammates one weekend. It's probably not surprising that there was beer and some other stuff at the party. My friends were telling me I could easily have a few beers and no one would know. I can't say I didn't want to, but my agency told me about students getting sent home for drinking one beer! To be honest, I'm 18, and it's legal to drink in Ecuador. I told my friends: 'listen, I have nothing against drinking a few beers, but I'm on an exchange visa, and if I get caught I'll get sent home.' My parents paid a lot of money for me to come on the program, and I just couldn't risk it. It's a good thing I didn't....the parents of the friend who was having the party came home early. We all had to get picked up. My host parents came and got me. They were upset, but they could tell I hadn't been drinking. I did get into some trouble for even being at a party without parents home, but thankfully, I didn't get sent home. In addition to the waste of money, I would have lost a whole school year!

My name is Victor from Brazil. I want to tell my story so that it doesn't happen to someone else. I had an awesome program for 6 months. I played football and was getting really good grades. My teachers liked me and I had a lot of American friends. I heard about a bonfire party that everyone was going to, and I did know there would be drinking, but no one seemed to be worried about getting caught. Unfortunately, the police showed up and we all got underage drinking citations. They brought us all home. My host parents were really upset, but we had become really close and they didn't want me to be kicked off the program. My host parents and even my Chemistry teacher and school principal called ISE to ask them to make an exception for me. You should all know that ISE has ZERO tolerance policy for alcohol or any other drug. If you drink or do drugs, you'll get sent home just like me...no exceptions. I'm home in Brazil and I've pretty much lost a whole year of school. If I could go back in time and make a different choice, I would.



Hi, my name is Son from Thailand. When I first arrived to my host family in Virginia, I could tell that my English was not as good as it should be. I had a really hard time communicating with them. After a few weeks, my Area Rep called for a meeting because the school reported that my grades weren't too good. She sat down with my host family and I, and she told me that I would need a tutor. My parents weren't happy about the expense, but we didn't really have a choice. I was close to failing almost all my classes and I knew that I could be sent home. I got a tutor twice a week and I went to extra help at school for my classes. I also spend a lot more time talking with my host family. I still struggle with English sometimes, but my grades eventually did come up. Mostly, the fact that my teachers and host family can see how hard I'm trying, has helped us all get along better. These past few months have not been easy, and I can say that it's not what I thought my time in the US would be like, but I know that I've already learned so much.



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