

# Friendship Family Handbook



**Center for Global Education**  
North Central College  
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## **WELCOME TO North Central College's Friendship Family Program !!**

This is the start of what could be a lifelong relationship where you and your student will learn from each other and grow together. Many people host students because of their own experiences overseas while others host students because they are interested in learning about other cultures. We hope this experience will encourage you to break stereotypes, discover your own community in a new way, learn more about a culture different than your own, and continue your international experience once your students returns to his or her home country. Hosting a student is a small, but significant step in contributing to world peace, tolerance, and understanding – it happens one relationship at a time.

### **HOSPITALITY HINTS**

- Become familiar with some basic facts about your student's home country.
- Make sure when you plan an activity with the student that time, place, dress, transportation and duration of activity are understood.
- Show real interest in your student. Get him or her to talk about themselves, their family, education, home life, culture, customs, cuisine likes and dislikes, aspirations, activities and plans.
- Encourage your student to try new things and have new experiences.
- Introduce the student to your community and friends.
- Familiarize the student with American social customs and manners.
- Holidays can be a lonesome time for students. Help them prepare for these times and include them in your family celebrations when possible.
- Invite your student along when you do the things your family normally does, like sharing birthday parties and attending school sporting events.
- Your student may not be used to pets, especially large dogs. Introduce pets slowly to your international student.
- Stay in contact with your student throughout the duration of their stay at NCC and beyond!

### **KNOWING WHERE TO STOP**

You will quickly become an important part of your student's life and it may be easy for the lines of responsibility to blur. American hosts are not responsible for financial support. It is recommended that hosts never cosign for loans or subscriptions to services such as cell phones. There are other areas of a student's lives which the host family is not expected to handle. The Center for Global Education is knowledgeable about immigration regulations and consequently responsible for assisting the student in the following areas:

- Employment regulations
- Immigration and visa issues
- Academic concerns
- Financial problems

### **ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS**

We encourage you to include your student on activities that your family has already planned on doing (family dinner, movie night, sporting events). Sometimes ordinary activities are often the best! We have also generated a list of other ideas if you wanted to take your exchange student on other adventures while they are here:

- BBQs with friends and family
- Making a scrapbook of memories
- Fishing
- Horseback riding
- Mini-golf
- Baking
- Ice skating
- Making a snowman



- Sledding
- Sports Games
- Apple orchard/pumpkin Patch
- Cheese Factory
- Local farms
- Visiting a zoo
- Visiting a museum
- Attending plays and concerts
- Visiting Chicago
- Wisconsin Dells
- Visit the State Capitol

### **HOST FAMILY FAQ**

#### **Can I host more than one student at a time?**

Yes, you may host more than one student. In many cases hosting a second student takes pressure off of both the family and the students. The international students feel more comfortable and will open up quicker in some cases.

#### **What if I don't speak a second language?**

Part of being an international student is immersing themselves in our culture. Each student can speak English. A benefit of having a host family is they are able to practice speaking English with someone outside of the classroom.

#### **What if our International Student is not the same religion as us?**

If similar religious backgrounds are something that is important to you as a host friend, we will do our best to accommodate your request.

#### **How long will our International Student be in the United States?**

The duration of the international student's stay is based on the wishes of each individual student. Some come for a semester, while others are here for several years. We hope that the connections you make will continue throughout their college career and lifetime.

#### **How often should we see our student?**

In the first couple months of becoming a Host Family, we ask that you see your student at least once a month. Life can get busy for both you and the student. As a host family, you should keep in contact regularly and try to arrange a time to meet that is accommodating to both you and the student.

#### **What happens in case of an emergency with our International Student?**

Each student has a health insurance card and coverage – it is mandatory for all international students at NCC. Feel free to contact us in case of an emergency if you have any questions:

#### **Jesus Velasco**

(630) 637-5299 (office)

jvelasco@noctrl.edu

#### **Campus Safety**

(630) 637-5911

#### **What if I have a question or concern about my International Student?**

For many of you, this is a new experience. We are always available to answer any questions you may have about our program or the international students. If a problem arises we are also available to work out a solution and help you and the student continue to have a rewarding experience. Please feel free to call or email us anytime with questions or concerns.



## **LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES**

Discovering features of other cultures is exciting. Some aspects of American culture that you can introduce to your host student are:

### **Social Relationships**

While Americans may be open and friendly, it can take time to develop actual friendships. International students are often discouraged that making friends isn't as easy as they thought it would be. Some international students have commented that they feel Americans are insincere. Mistaking American friendliness to friendship, they are disappointed when relationships do not take on deeper meaning. In many other cultures, friendship is reserved for very few people, is based on mutual love and respect, and involves unlimited obligation. In the U.S., close friendships certainly exist, but Americans also have many "friends," among whom the foreign student may only be one. Talking about how friendships develop in the U.S. may help the student achieve a realistic view of what can be expected of his or her American friends.

### **Achievement**

In the U.S., status is primarily based on what individuals have achieved on their own, including education and the level of success in their employment. Many students' cultures dictate that respect is given based on other qualifiers such as age or title. Additionally, some international students may not be used to the high level of competition in the U.S.

### **Informality**

The U.S. lifestyle is generally quite casual and this can be shocking to some international students who are accustomed to a more formal structure. Some students may find it unusual in the beginning to use first name and dress casually.

### **Individualism**

Americans are encouraged at an early age to develop and pursue their own goals. There is a higher value placed on self-reliance than in many other countries where parents or families help with decision-making. In many countries, being part of a group is more important than focusing on one individual.

### **Privacy**

The U.S. on the outside appears to be open and transparent, with open homes and office doors. However, Americans enjoy time alone, value private space, and are guarded with what they consider personal information. International students may have difficulty adjusting to this, especially if they live in residence halls and share a room with an American student.

### **Time**

Americans take pride in using their time wisely, which is why they tend to plan events in advance. Punctuality is valued in the U.S. and this can be a major cultural adjustment to many. Americans may "live by the clock" but this is not true in many other cultures. In some places, for example, the time noted on a social invitation implies one should arrive an hour or more later. In others, an invitation is to be extended several times before it is accepted.

### **Equality**

International students are often used to a hierarchical system or one in which genders are treated differently. It is important for international students to know that in the United States everyone is to have equal opportunities and have the same rights as everyone else.

## **CULTURE SHOCK**

Living in a culture different from their own is an exciting and often challenging experience for international students. Besides finding housing, registering for courses, and getting to know a new city, they will probably go through "cultural adjustment," the transition to a new culture. Most people will experience some "culture shock" as part of this transitional process.



## **What Is Culture Shock?**

“Culture shock” is the name given to a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. Coming to Naperville from another country, your student will encounter a multitude of new things—buildings, stores, and even the trees may look different. Food may not be the same, and people may look, speak, and act differently from people at home. Even the smells may be different. Their English might not serve them as well as they expected it would. They might not be able to convey their full personality in English, with the result that they think other people are seeing them as a child. And their family and friends are far away. As a result of all this they may feel confused, unsure of themselves, and may have some doubts about the wisdom of their decision to come here.

## **Symptoms**

Some people are more affected by culture shock than others. People experiencing culture shock tend to become nervous and unusually tired. They may want to sleep a lot or may have difficulty sleeping. They may write many letters home. They may feel frustrated and hostile toward the local people. They may get excessively angry about minor irritations. It is not unusual to become very dependent on fellow nationals. All these feelings may make it difficult to deal with residents of the host country and use their language.

## **Coping With Culture Shock**

Different people react differently to culture shock. Some become depressed, or even physically ill. Others are stimulated by the new experiences. Here are a few suggestions to share with your student if he or she is experiencing the loneliness or distress of culture shock:

- Find people to interact with. Ask them questions. As you take an interest in them, your feelings will have a focal point outside of yourself.
- Surround yourself with familiar things—a favorite jacket, a photo, a CD. Make your environment pleasant and reinforcing.
- Slow down. Simplify your daily tasks. Relax. Let your emotions catch up with the newness all around you.
- Develop patterns. Follow the same routine each day so that you get a sense of returning to the familiar.
- Give expression to your feelings. Cry. Laugh. Sing. Pray. Draw a picture.
- Revise your goals to accommodate detours instead of scolding yourself for failures.
- Keep working on language skills. Practice the American idiom, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”
- Confide to friends, and even your host family, that you are sad. Their support will warm you.
- Make a few small decisions and carry them out. Your resolve in small things will increase your confidence. Be assured that, however stressful, culture shock passes if you are willing to let the process of cross-cultural adaptation take its course.

## **Be patient**

Adjustment is a gradual, day-by-day process. It normally takes some time—a few weeks, a few months, and maybe longer—for people to become comfortable in a new country. If your student is struggling reassure them that with time, they will become more comfortable in their new environment.

## **Take care**

It is particularly important in times of stress to eat a balanced diet, get enough rest, and get regular physical exercise. Encourage your student to take breaks for recreation or socializing. Studying or working constantly, without taking care of themselves, may make them sick, and worsen the situation.

## **Stereotypes**

On many occasions, international students will be seen as “a foreign student” or “a student from country X.” Whether the stereotype is positive or negative depends on the person’s experience, not on anything about your student personally. Try not to let this discourage you. Try to start some interesting conversations about the subject of



stereotypes—what peoples’ stereotypes are, where they came from, and so on. And remember that you probably have your own stereotypes about U.S. Americans.

### **Talk with others**

Encourage your student to talk to other, more experienced international students. Ask them what things they have found most bothersome, most interesting, most perplexing. Ask them what sources of information and support have been most helpful.

### **Status**

Different societies attach different importance to roles or positions; for example, in many countries, the role of “university student” or “professor” is accorded more respect or status than it is in the United States. It can be difficult to adjust to having a lower social status than you are accustomed to. It helps to recognize that your student is not personally being downgraded, but that you happen to be in a society where respect is expressed differently than is the case at home.

### **Learn from the experience**

Moving into a new culture can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your student’s life. It gives them the opportunity to explore an entirely new way of living and compare it to their own. Here are some questions that your student might try to answer as they encounter people in Naperville and surrounding communities:

- How do they make friends?
- How do friends treat each other?
- Who respects whom, and how is respect shown?
- What attitudes do they have about their families?
- What is the relationship between males and females?
- How do people spend their time? Why?
- How do they deal with conflicts or disagreements?
- What do they talk about?
- What kind of evidence do they seek or use when evaluating an idea or trying to win an argument?

### **Understanding This Model of Cultural Adjustment**

#### *Pre-departure anxiety*

There’s a lot to do before going to another country. Students often become overwhelmed with details and are nervous about leaving family and friends for so long. Boarding the plane can bring enthusiasm back.

#### *“The Honeymoon”*

Just like with many new relationships, the first reaction to a new culture is often euphoric. Your student has finally arrived after months, maybe years, of planning. The differences in scenery, food, language, or customs can be exhilarating!

#### *Initial culture shock*

This is where the excitement of differences can often quickly turn to frustration. For many, the shock can come at the first meal when familiar foods are nowhere to be found. For others, it is the realization that speaking a second language all day is not only exhausting; it’s frustrating to feel limited in your communication. For others, the initial shock is an accumulation of many factors, including the lack of familiar faces and cultural cues.

#### *Surface adjustment*

This can occur when your student has settled into a new routine. Maybe they successfully registered and made it to their classes. Perhaps your student has met some people in their classes that seem like they will become friends.



### *Culture shock*

This is a state of mind your student may reach when the deeper differences between cultures are experienced and the novelty of the difference decreases. There may be unresolved cultural conflicts in the classroom, with friends, or with the society in general.

### *Places of true culture learning*

Moving out of culture shock and into adaptation and adjustment is not simply a matter of feeling better. Rather, it requires understanding the reasons behind culture shock and developing personal strategies for dealing with cultural differences. Most sojourners cannot do this process alone; get help from others with international experience or the Center for Global Education to help you to understand U.S. culture and appropriate coping strategies.

### *Adaptation and adjustment*

It takes time for your student to adapt and adjust to their new environment. Skills they developed in previous transitions will help them when they encounter future intercultural challenges. Adjusting and adapting to a new culture requires the ability to know themselves well and to know the ways of the culture and its expectations of them.

### *Reentry shock or adjustment*

Your student will face a number of challenges when he or she returns home- the most significant can be that your student did not expect it to be difficult to go home. But it can be hard, no matter how excited your student is to see family and friends. It can be challenging to make sense of their experience in the U.S., especially if they have to immediately find a job or return to their studies. With re-entry, the goal is not to jump right back into everything. Students want to put their new found skills to good use: seeing things from another point of view, speaking another language, and learning of another area of the world. Staying connected with the friends they meet while at NCC is one strategy that can lessen the shock of reentry.

## **HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND HYGIENE**

Hospitalization in the United States is very expensive. Therefore, NCC requires all international students to purchase health insurance. Students can acquire their mandatory North Central policy through HTH Worldwide. Students should always carry their insurance card with them.

### **Dyson Wellness Center**

2nd Floor Benedetti- Wehrli Stadium  
(630) 637-5550 (phone)  
(630) 637- 5554 (fax)

The Dyson Wellness Center (DWC) provides confidential medical and counseling services to all students. The DWC offers guidance in health choices and educational programming as well. Please note, all registered students may use the medical and counseling services at no cost.

### **Edwards Hospital**

801 South Washington Street  
Naperville, IL. 60540- 7499  
(630) 527-3000

### **Linden Oaks Hospital (Mental & Behavioral Health Services)**

801 South Washington Street  
Naperville, IL. 60540 -7499  
(630) 305-5500



**DuPage County Health Department**

111 North Country Farm Road  
Wheaton, IL. 60187  
(630)682- 7400

**Naperville Taxi**

(630) 355-5959

If your student does not have transportation to Edwards Hospital or Linden Oaks, the Office of Campus Safety is able to provide transportation free of charge to all registered students.

**If your student is sick or injured they should:**

- Call ahead for an appointment.

**Emergency Care**

Hospital Emergency Rooms are used when your student needs immediate care and the Dyson Wellness Center is closed or they are so sick or injured that they need an ambulance for transportation. Emergency rooms are very expensive and should be utilized for emergencies only. In very serious cases they may need to reach an ambulance. Dial **911**. Your student should be prepared to give their location to assist emergency workers in locating the emergency.

**Counseling Services**

Counseling assists individuals in overcoming obstacles that may otherwise prevent them from attaining academic, personal, and professional goals. Here are just a few examples of issues that are addressed in counseling: academic concerns, stress, anxiety, depression, anger management, relationship building, homesickness, and self-esteem. Individual counseling is provided by on-campus counselors located in the Dyson Wellness Center. Students may call or stop in to schedule an appointment. Services are confidential, free, and provided by licensed professional staff.

**KEEPING IN TOUCH**

The return home for your student is an exciting experience. Not only does the student get to see family and friends again, but the student will also see his or her country with a new perspective. As a host, it is fun to see how a student changes and what the student says about life back home. We hope that a mutual lifelong friendship will be created. Students are often open to hosting YOU in their home and returning some of what you have given them. So stay in touch. Email, Skype, and Facebook are great ways to continue to connect with your student long after he or she has returned home!

**REFER A FAMILY**

Let's face it, being a Host Family is a great opportunity. Extend the experience to your friends and family by referring them to the Center for Global Education. Families interested in becoming a host family can learn more about the program on our website. They can also find Host Family applications. Complete applications can be emailed, faxed or airmailed to the Center for Global Education. We will review the family's application and match a student with a host family. Share your experience and encourage your friends and family to participate. The more families the better!!

Thank you for offering to host an international student!

We know it will be a fulfilling and rewarding experience for all involved!

Information adapted from **NAFSA's Friendship with a Foreign Student: A Guide for Host Families and Friends of Foreign Students (2006)**