

# **Nacel Open Door**



## **Host Family Handbook**

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## **Dear Host Family,**

We would like to extend our warm thanks and appreciation to you for choosing to become a Nacel Open Door host family. In a short time you will be sharing your home and daily life with one of the many teenagers from abroad who is fascinated by the United States. How lucky your visitor will be to learn about American life through the warmth and openness of your family rather than as a tourist! The hospitality of families is the backbone of Nacel Open Door programs.

The cross-cultural experience yields exciting results. It is an opportunity not only to share your own culture with your student but also to learn about another country and its people as you enjoy your student's visit. The United States Department of State considers international student exchange to be an important part of our nation's foreign diplomacy efforts. As a host family, you will be an essential component of this undertaking!

This handbook seeks to give you the necessary practical points as well as background material that can be helpful in understanding your student and the hosting experience. Many generalities are discussed, and they may not always apply to your student, but years of experience have shown that it is helpful to share observations of those who have previously participated.

We want to express our gratitude for your enthusiastic participation in our program. We believe that there is no better way to build lasting international understanding than by opening the family circle to people from another land.

Merci!

Danke!

¡Gracias!

Thank You!

## **The Nacel Open Door Team**

## Preparation

### *The Participants*

Many students from other countries dream of the opportunity to experience America. The importance of foreign languages in their education, particularly the English language, helps to explain their desire to spend time in the United States. Parents often arrange for their children to have experiences in other countries, believing that such opportunities are valuable for their growth and enrichment. The purpose of the Nacel Open Door Long Term Public School Program is to help these students discover American life by becoming a member of an American family for a semester or year. By opening your home to an international student on this program, you are helping to further the foreign diplomacy efforts of the U.S. Department of State.

Nacel Open Door partner organizations in over 50 countries explain the spirit of the Nacel Open Door program and encourage students and their parents to be sure this is the right program for them. Students complete application forms, and if accepted into the program, they receive a student handbook to help them prepare for their stay. In their home country, all students are also required to attend a pre-departure orientation session organized by a Nacel Open Door partner.

Please carefully read this host family handbook so that you will be aware of the adjustments you and your student will face and the things your family can do to help. Encourage each member of your family to read the handbook and to become involved in welcoming your student into your home. It is very important that the decision to host be a family one. Planning and getting to know as much as you can about your student and his/her country in advance can help relieve anxiety and the uneasiness of the unknown.

Please understand, however, that no handbook will eliminate surprises. This home-stay experience will be an adventure for both you and your student! Expectations should be realistic, and you should be prepared to expect individual differences. Some students are more outgoing than others, some will adjust and adapt more readily than others, and some will have greater ability to communicate than others. Openness and personal understanding will be essential to bring out the best in each individual. Warm, enriching, and meaningful experiences can take place when everyone is willing to try.

### *Welcome Correspondence*

Upon receiving the contact information for your student, email or write a letter of welcome as soon as possible introducing your family members and describing your community. **Be sure to include:**

- A family photo
- Any special things your student might want to pack (for example, types of clothing necessary because of your plans or local climate)
- Any special information you might want your student to know
- A note of welcome from each member of the family

**If using standard mail, please keep in mind the following points:**

- People in other countries often capitalize all letters in last names and cities.
- The zip code comes BEFORE rather than AFTER the name of the city.
- Include the country as the last line of the address.
- Clearly mark your letter AIRMAIL and be sure to use the appropriate airmail postage.

**As a family, you will experience various stages throughout your hosting experience:**

- **Arrival:** You may feel like you have a stranger in your home for awhile. The transition from guest to family member may require time and patience.
- **Settling In:** Don't feel like you must constantly "entertain" your student, but do include him/her in family activities and help him/her to understand and follow your family rules.
- **Establishing a Meaningful Relationship:** After the initial stages, more sharing takes place. You'll hopefully feel that you have gained a new son or daughter while enjoying the learning experience.
- **Departure:** You may feel a sense of loss when your student leaves. However, the relationship you developed can still grow long-distance.

## **Arrival**

If possible, have your whole family greet your student upon arrival. A warm welcome makes a lasting impression, and the students are pleasantly surprised by American enthusiasm.

- Making a sign with your student's name to welcome him or her can be fun and very helpful.
- Remember that your student has likely had a long flight and may have traveled some distance before even boarding the plane, so don't expect too much at first. A lot of rest will be needed to compensate for jet lag.
- The natural parents will be anxious to receive news of their child's arrival, so allow time for your student to contact their parents.

## ***Welcoming Your Student into Your Home and Community***

Help your student to feel at home with your family, welcoming him/her as another son or daughter, brother or sister. Foster positive attitudes from the beginning, and try to provide a friendly, warm environment that will stimulate meaningful relationships.

- Let everyone know you have a special visitor! Neighbors, friends and relatives can help to expand impressions of American life and make the stay even more enriching.
- Help your student become familiar with their new surroundings, and let them know where they can store their belongings.
- Point out things and places to be aware of, and encourage full participation as a member of your family.

- Give your student a list of important phone numbers in case he/she gets lost or needs help, and explain how to make calls and use pay phones.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your student must always have a telephone available to them in your home in the event of an emergency. If your family does not have a land line (e.g. if you use cell phones only), some accommodation must be made to ensure a phone is available in the home at all times.

If you have a child in high school, we suggest that your child introduce the exchange student to the principal, teachers, and friends during the first day in school. Americans tend to be somewhat casual about introductions, but people from many other cultures are used to simple formalities and will expect to be properly introduced to young people as well as adults.

If you do not have a child in high school, we recommend that you introduce your student to other teenagers in your neighborhood or with whom you are acquainted. It would be a good idea to ask one American student to act as a guide for the exchange student during the first few days in school, in the same manner as a host brother or sister would.

### ***Relations with Family Abroad***

Our greatest hope is that this experience will provide you with the opportunity to develop a lasting friendship, not only with your student but with your student's family as well. We encourage you to email or write a note to the parents of your student during the stay. Writing in English is fine. The natural parents would be delighted to hear from you and will find a way to have your letter translated, if necessary. Encourage your student to contact his/her family to share with them all that he/she is experiencing.

### **Communication**

Communication will be the key to a rewarding experience. This communication may not always consist of talking, however!

- Gestures and facial expressions will be extremely important. Remember that when communication is difficult, a smile is worth a thousand words.
- Individual speaking abilities vary greatly; the most important thing is getting thoughts and feelings out in the open to avoid misunderstanding.
- Compliments and encouragement can help bring out the best in your student.

The first few days may be a little more difficult. Often students will not understand or follow when groups of people are talking.

- Speak slowly when necessary and try to be patient. It does not help to simply speak louder to your student! Rephrasing your sentence using simple words may help.
- Be aware of idioms and colloquial expressions that your student may not understand.
- It may be necessary to repeat important information regarding your daily routine and time schedule. Writing things down may be very helpful as well.

Your student may have trouble remembering their English at the beginning of the stay. Your American accent may be very new to them, and it may take a while to become accustomed to your regional accent and vocabulary. They will most likely be eager to learn new expressions, and they will also want to improve their skill, so don't hesitate to correct their pronunciation and usage now and then, but encourage them to express themselves even if they make mistakes.

### **Don't be surprised if your student seems quiet at first.**

- The change in schedule as well as the extra effort needed to communicate will contribute to your student's fatigue, and they will need time to adjust. They may simply need to rest at first.
- It is natural and should be expected that your student may want to be alone at times in his/her room. This does not always mean that your student is unhappy! However, if this behavior becomes excessive, you should talk to your student about how he/she is doing and encourage more interaction with friends and your family.
- You may also notice what might seem to you like a lack of enthusiasm. Children from other countries are often taught that it is polite to be quiet and calm. Being bubbly or excited is sometimes considered immature.
- Be aware that many students will have a limited vocabulary and may be unable to express themselves as they would in their own language. For example, you may find that the way they speak is quite direct, brief, or even seemingly harsh ("I don't like it," "I don't want it," "I go to bed"). You can help avoid misunderstandings by remembering that your student is probably thinking and feeling much more than he/she is able to tell you.
- Your interest in learning about your student's country and the life of its people will help get your student involved in conversation. Young people may not be storehouses of statistics or specialists on political and economic situations, but they are able to share firsthand information about everyday life.

## **Integration**

Encourage and help your student to become involved in conversation and activities. They may not take the initiative because of language difficulty or because they may not be sure what you expect of them. Following are some ways you can help your student integrate into your family:

- Sharing a room with one of the children in the family can help your student to become a more integral part of the family if they are about the same age. However, sharing a room with young children could be difficult. If an option is available, just ask your student whether he/she would prefer sharing a room or having a private room. **Your student must have his/her own bed.**
- Make room for your student's clothing and personal items in a dresser and/or closet and in the bathroom. Your student will feel much more at home if they can settle in and have adequate space for their belongings.

- Ask your student to do their part in keeping their room clean and helping with certain household tasks. Even though they may not be accustomed to helping at home, they have been encouraged to do so because it provides an opportunity for them to be a part of your routine. It's fine to say, "Please help me do this..." Then, show your student how to do what is expected. Sharing responsibility for odd jobs can strengthen relationships.
- Companionship with the family is a primary component of the exchange experience. Try not to leave your student alone for extended periods of time. If everyone in your family needs to be gone for a certain part of the day, make other arrangements for your student during that time and/or identify someone who can be responsible for them in your absence. **Under no circumstances should your student be left alone overnight without a responsible adult present.**

Try to understand that the "normal" way of doing things in America is not always the same as in other parts of the world. Good manners, proper behavior, and family rules may vary depending on the culture. For example, some students may not know that the shower curtain should be kept inside the bathtub when showering. In some other cultures, students are often accustomed to keeping the doors inside their home closed at all times. Be aware that American hygiene habits may be different from those of other cultures. Please help your student adjust to American hygiene habits such as length of shower, frequency of showers, and laundry schedules. It is not uncommon for students to wear the same outfit for more than one day. Discussing the differences as you help your student understand American culture will be one of the enriching aspects of this experience.

While it is expected that your exchange student will need to adapt to your family, also remember that your own children may need to adapt to their new sister or brother. Your own children might feel left out at times, and it is normal for them to be frustrated with the extra attention you may be giving your exchange student. To help cope with this:

- Let your children know that you understand what's bothering them. Show that you care by asking their opinions and including them in making plans.
- Don't ask your children to make too many sacrifices for the student. You might want to consider making alternate plans for your student (with friends, for example) and do something alone with your children at times during your student's stay.

If there are other exchange students in your neighborhood, it is recommended that no great effort be made to bring them into **daily** contact with each other. Too much time with friends from abroad may hinder their integration with their host families. The time your student spends living in your home and community should be an **American** experience! We do, however, encourage you to call other host families in your area to arrange get-togethers. Your coordinator and local representative may also arrange events and trips for students in the area.

## Adjustment

Generalities do not often help people to understand each other, and we ask you to be conscious of the fact that there are significant differences between cultures. Children from other countries are brought up differently than American children. Sometimes students act on the basis of

impressions they have received from television and movies about life in the United States. America may still be for them a land of dreams and adventure, and it's difficult for them to have a clear idea of what life here is really like before they personally discover it.

They have usually learned that American people are "relaxed," and they sometimes interpret this to mean that we don't care about rules. They may have a confused picture of shifting social patterns and freedoms and may not realize that many American families are basically quite conservative.

For example, although the students are told to bring along dress clothes as well as casual clothes, once in a while they arrive with nothing but jeans because they're convinced that Americans only wear jeans! When emailing or writing to your student, please indicate the need to bring dress clothes if there is going to be a special occasion to attend.

It will be interesting to discuss the impressions your student has about America and the changes in attitudes that develop during the stay for your family as well as the student. **We encourage you to:**

- Talk about the differences in culture, remembering that each country has special qualities, and "different" does not constitute bad or wrong or abnormal. One's perspective is relative to one's background and upbringing.
- Enjoy the observation of these differences rather than comparing them judgmentally.

The following section on family life and social life are meant to help you understand the background of your student. You shouldn't change your schedule or habits, but we hope an awareness of what your student may be used to will make it easier for you to help your student adapt to your family's lifestyle.

### ***Family Life***

Families in many other countries are traditionally close-knit. A lot of time is spent together as a family, and parents assume a great deal of responsibility for teaching their children to become responsible adults. Children are often brought up under careful discipline and are taught to think and reason in an orderly and philosophical manner. In the United States people seem to focus on the importance of youth, while many other cultures tend to focus on the importance of becoming a mature adult (the French and Spanish languages have no word for teenager!). Whereas we encourage children to express themselves, children in other countries may be taught to speak to adults only when spoken to, to contribute intelligently, and not to monopolize conversation. They are taught to be individuals and to spend a certain amount of time alone in their rooms, doors closed, for reading or writing.

Television doesn't play as big of a role in all countries as it does in some American homes. There are usually fewer TV channels, the broadcasting day is shorter than ours, and there are fewer commercials, sometimes grouped in a certain time slot. There are many documentaries and discussions on various topics, including quality of life, leisure activities, political matters, justice, pollution, foreign civilizations, etc. In addition to the news and sports, many favorite American

television series and movies are broadcast. Ask your student about the American shows seen on television in their home country.

Mealtime is a very important part of the day. The noon meal has traditionally been the most important meal in other countries, but work requirements are gradually changing this tradition, particularly in large cities. In some places, businesses and schools close for one to two hours so that families can have a leisurely midday meal. Whether at midday or in the evening, meals are an important time for families to share.

Breakfast in other countries is often light and tends to consist of bread or rolls with coffee, tea, or hot chocolate. In some countries they may have cold cuts, vegetables, and boiled eggs as well. The main meal usually has an appetizer, a main course, salad, cheese and dessert (often fruit). Dinner or supper is later than in most American families. Ask your student to describe meals and dining schedules in his/her country for you.

It is important to remember that your schedule may be totally different from your student's usual schedule. This doesn't mean you should change your habits. We simply want you to be aware of the differences. If your family's main meal is in the evening, explain to your student that lunch will be a light meal and encourage eating a bigger breakfast (cereal, toast and juice or whatever the rest of your family has) so that he/she doesn't get hungry during the day. Eating out of the refrigerator on one's own would be a new experience for most students.

Your student may be surprised at some of our eating habits. Snacking between meals and even while sitting on the floor may seem quite strange. Putting everything on the table at the same time rather than eating in courses may be a new experience. Table manners may vary from ours. In some Asian countries, smacking the lips while eating indicates enjoyment, not a sign of poor manners. People from other countries typically keep both hands on the table during meals. Milk is not usually a common beverage for most students. Many of the foods Americans customarily eat will be quite new to students, such as fast and frozen foods, sandwiches, certain candy, watermelon, peanut butter, and corn on the cob. (Corn is eaten mainly by livestock in many countries, so students may be hesitant to try it at first.)

Because there are so many fast food and family-type restaurants in the U.S. and schedules are often busy, American families tend to eat out more often than families in other countries. The student is expected to use personal spending money for snacks or treats when out with friends and to also pay for lunches if they want to purchase them at school, but all other regular meals are to be provided by you, whether at home or in a restaurant. Students must also have the option to bring a lunch from home, and this food is to be provided by the host family.

## ***Social Life***

Whereas Americans tend to belong to several social and service clubs, music organizations and athletic teams that require members of a family to go their separate ways in the evenings, people abroad are quite family-oriented and tend to spend more time at home or doing things together as a family. In other cultures, people generally don't socialize in homes as much as Americans, and neighbors or friends usually don't just drop in. Socializing is done more often in cafes or outdoors.

Our relaxed atmosphere, the way we greet each other, and our frequent use of the telephone may be surprising to your student. They may also find that there is less distinction among social classes in the U.S. than in their own country.

Many people in other countries live in apartments, and those who live in individual homes usually have small yards surrounded by walls, fences or hedges. Your student may be surprised to see that we have so many open spaces. They are often impressed by the vastness of everything, at how large our farms are, and how spread out our cities are. While many Americans enjoy suburban living, many people in other countries consider it desirable to live in the city center.

The distance from one place to another in the U.S. may be almost inconceivable to your student. In the U.S., gasoline is cheaper than in most other countries. Students may be surprised at how often Americans use their cars and how few people use public transportation. In other countries, buses and trains tend to be a regular means of transportation as opposed to automobiles.

People in other countries often consider Americans to be wasteful consumers, but our respect of nature, concern for the environment, community pride, and patriotism usually impress people from other countries. They are surprised to see our flag displayed in so many places.

## ***Religion***

Historically, religion has played an important role in many countries, but diversity in practice is prevalent. Many Catholics in other countries tend to think of Protestants as one large group. They have a difficult time understanding the concept of various denominations, which are common in the United States. Some students may be surprised at the role that religion plays in the lives of many Americans. Their views of American society have often been shaped by movies, music, and TV shows.

The students have been strongly encouraged to attend church services with their host families if invited to do so. Some students may be reluctant to attend church more than once a week. Others may want to attend only a church of their own religion and, if so, have indicated this on their application. Please remember, your student has the right to his/her religious belief, whether or not it agrees with your family's practice.

## ***Education***

The curriculum in schools in other countries is highly structured, and there are few electives or extracurricular activities. The systems are very competitive and selective, and homework is very important, even for young children.

- Mental and intellectual discipline is stressed, with emphasis on factual knowledge and the ability to analyze. Foreign languages, politics and philosophy are studied more than in most American schools.
- Foreign languages are required for anyone who intends to attend university, and language study usually begins at age 11. English is an important second language, and many students study another language as well.

Be sure to ask your student about the types of classes taken in their country and the typical daily schedule. Discuss the differences between your local school system and your student's, and explain the cost of higher education in the U.S. Your student may be surprised, as it is likely that most universities in his/her country are tuition-free.

Nacel Open Door exchange students are expected to enroll in a full course of study, maintain at least a "C" average in their school courses, and have **no** failing grades. Students must enroll in an English class, and they should also enroll in an American history or government class, math, and physical and/or social science classes. If your student is struggling with their school work, is failing a class, and/or falls below a "C" average, please contact your local representative or coordinator.

Students are not guaranteed placement in a particular grade level, nor are they guaranteed a diploma or the right to graduate. These decisions are at the sole discretion of the host school. Some students express interest in attending an American university and taking college entrance exams. Since ours is not a college preparatory program, it is not expected that the host family will facilitate any activity to help a student attend university in the United States.

## ***Recreation***

While physical education is taught in schools in other countries, high school sports competition is rarely available in their home country. In many other countries, people have never heard of cheerleaders. American football, baseball, and hockey are little known, but many students are interested in learning more about them. The most popular sport in many parts of the world is soccer. Very often, people in other countries have to belong to clubs in order to participate in sports. Some of these are quite expensive and, as a result, some sports are limited. Athletic eligibility is not guaranteed to exchange students during their time in the U.S., as that determination is made by the state or district athletic association governing sports eligibility and participation.

While in the U.S., extracurricular activities represent a great way for exchange students to make friends and get involved, and they should be encouraged to participate. Talk to your student about possible extracurricular activities, as well as how to you might be able arrange transportation to and from activities if needed.

In many other countries, university students may work during their summer vacation, but high school students rarely have jobs. People often go to the beach during vacation time, especially in July and August. You may notice that some students have revealing swimwear. Attitudes in many countries toward such styles are quite open and matter-of-fact and shouldn't be misinterpreted.

In some cultures, young people start dating at a later age than many Americans and tend to go out more often in groups. Be sure to let your student know how you feel about dating and explain your family's curfew expectations. Movies and dancing are very popular, and many students will be familiar with American music. Sometimes they will know the words to a song even though they have no idea what the words mean.

## **Employment**

According to U.S. Department of State J-1 visa regulations, students are not allowed to be employed on a part-time or full-time basis. They are, however, permitted to do sporadic or intermittent work. The types of jobs they might accept are language or other tutoring, lawn mowing, snow removal, car washing, etc.

## **Planning Activities**

We hope that through participation in the daily activities of your family, your student will develop an appreciation for American life. Students will learn a great deal from sharing in your normal everyday life. They'll find contrasts with what they're used to, and in some cases, differences from what they have heard about the United States. It's certainly not fair to generalize, but many have the idea from television and movies that the United States is New York on the east coast, Los Angeles on the west coast, and little but prairie and farmland in between! Help foster a better understanding of American culture as found in your area.

- Remember the importance of opportunities for your student to observe things that may seem insignificant to you but tell a lot about your way of life, such as visiting your place of work, going shopping, getting groceries, looking at family pictures, or recalling important events in your family's life.
- Games and sports are usually good mixers and can be a fun way to "break the ice."
- Although you are not expected to plan daily excursions, it would be nice for your student if a few points of interest in your area could be visited. If you plan to take a day or weekend trip somewhere, why not plan it during your student's visit?

Very often children from other countries will respond "no" to a suggestion simply because they have been taught that it is more polite to do this than to agree to something. Strongly encourage your student to take part in activities, even if the first response is negative. Instead of asking, "Would you like to do this," say "Let's do this," or "We're going to..."

Many times, a student doesn't know how to answer a question about an activity because he/she may be unaware of the cost and time involved and doesn't want to be a burden. Promote participation and enjoyment by being encouraging, frank, and positive! We highly recommend that you encourage your student to participate in the following:

- Keeping a journal (with new vocabulary words!) and/or scrapbook documenting their stay and experiences.
- Taking part in a local TV or newspaper interview, arranged by your family or your local representative. Your coordinator and the Nacel Open Door national office would appreciate receiving a copy of any newspaper article featuring your student and/or family.

More important than any number of activities is the attitude each member of your family takes toward hosting a student. If everyone is involved and concerned about making the experience worthwhile, everyone will benefit.

Past host families have enjoyed sharing activities with their students from the list that follows. Many are low-cost or no-cost activities. You can share this list with your student and decide together what looks interesting.

### ***Possible Activities for at Home and Away***

- Go to the library and check out a book or videotape
- Visit a local industry and take a tour
- Go to a baseball game (local or pro)
- Go to a rodeo
- Go to an amusement park or fair
- Attend a summer festival or arts and crafts show
- Take your student with you to work – let them see what you do on the job
- Take a low-cost community education course – they're offered on a variety of fun and interesting subjects.
- Participate in your local park recreation program
- Take an aerobics exercise, jazzercise, or dance class, or do some weight-lifting. Sometimes the local YMCA or other sports clubs have special short-term memberships.
- Visit a local museum or art gallery. Students are often especially interested in Native American culture and traditions.
- Visit your state capitol building, courthouse, and historic sites
- See some old cathedrals and modern churches
- Go to a zoo
- See a university campus – check out the architecture, see the sports facilities, visit the student union
- Drive to a state park (or a national park) and take a picnic lunch – see some lakes or mountains, visit a ski resort, do some hiking.
- Ask your state tourist or visitor's bureau to send you a guide outlining events in your state.
- Visit a water park or go to the local public swimming pool
- Float down a river on a raft or inner tubes
- Play some games – card games, board games, etc. Have everyone learn a new game together!
- Pick fruit at a local fruit farm
- Show your student how to prepare American food (they love chocolate chip cookies, homemade ice cream, Jell-O, etc.)
- Help your student prepare a typical dish from his/her own country
- Have a backyard or neighborhood barbeque
- Visit an Amish community, if close by
- Visit a radio/television station and take a tour; they may want to do an interview.
- Enjoy a sporting event of the season
- Take your student on your errands. Many of the things we consider "routine" are new experiences for the student.
- Make a scrapbook or home video

## Travel Policy

The primary goal of the Long Term Public School Program is for students to attend school and experience America through their classroom and host family experiences. Although our program is not a travel program, we understand that many students do have the opportunity to travel while staying in the United States. However, since our program has an academic focus, and due to liability concerns, we have guidelines in place regarding student travel, particularly overnight travel. It is each student's responsibility to provide the Nacel Open Door Travel Director in the national office with **all** necessary travel forms before undertaking any overnight travel. If students do not allow sufficient time for their travel forms to be processed, the travel request will be denied. It is recommended that travel proposal forms be submitted a minimum of seven days before the travel date. For international travel, it is recommended that students submit their travel proposal forms four weeks before the travel date. Plane tickets should not be purchased until the travel has been approved. The travel forms referenced on the following pages are available on the Nacel Open Door web site at [www.nacelopendoor.org/hosting\\_travel.htm](http://www.nacelopendoor.org/hosting_travel.htm).

- Students are **not** permitted to take a trip alone without adult supervision. **Under no circumstances should students be left alone overnight.**
- Students are not allowed to travel alone by bus or train. Students may travel alone by airplane; however, arrangements must be made for an approved adult to provide transportation for the student to and from the airport.
- Nacel Open Door reserves the right to reject any travel proposal that involves a "high risk activity." These activities include but are not limited to: hunting of any kind, handling firearms or any activity involving the use of firearms or weapons, skydiving, bungee jumping, and operating motor vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, cars, boats, aircraft, etc.). If you have questions about whether an activity is considered "high risk," please contact the Nacel Open Door national office.
- Nacel Open Door discourages frequent or extensive personal visits to or from friends or relatives during the exchange program. It is, however, understandable and natural for exchange students to wish to visit relatives or friends of their natural families while they are in the United States. Such visits may be permitted if they do not interfere with the primary obligation of the exchange students to their host families and schools and if proper permission is received by Nacel Open Door from the student's natural parents.
- Since the first months of the program are an important adjustment period for students and host families, visits to or from friends and family should take place after this period, and it is recommended that such visits take place towards the end of the program.
- Major holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, should be spent with the host family.
- Nacel Open Door approval is required for student overnight stays outside the host family's community.
- Students are not allowed to travel to their home country prior to the end of their exchange program without withdrawing from the program. Occasional exceptions may be made to return home in cases of death or serious illness of an immediate family member.

## ***Overnight Travel with the Host Family***

- **Any time** a student wants to travel overnight outside of their host community, but within the United States, with their host parents, the student must submit to the Nacel Open Door national office:
  - Travel Proposal Form
- **Any time** the student travels **outside of the United States** with the host family, the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with the Host Family Outside the United States
  - DS-2019 Form – the original “Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Visa Status” must be sent via traceable mail or courier to the Nacel Open Door national office to be signed for re-entry into the United States.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If a student is planning to travel outside of the United States, he/she must contact the Nacel Open Door national office and speak with the Travel Director regarding any visa forms that would need to be signed in order to re-enter the United States. Students must abide by the visa restrictions of the country they plan to visit. **It is the student’s responsibility to investigate such visa requirements.** Nacel Open Door does not bear any responsibility for information or procedures relative to the visa requirements of the destination country.

## ***Overnight Travel with an Adult Other Than the Host Parent***

- **Any time** a student wants to travel overnight within their host community, e.g. on a sleepover, this is permitted without any documentation **as long as the host parents know the parents at the home in which the student will stay.** Sleepovers are permitted without documentation for up to **two consecutive nights.** If a student intends to stay at another home in their host community for more than two nights consecutively, the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form
  - Independent Party Receiving Acceptance Form for Independent Student Travel
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with School, Church, Clubs, or any other Independent Party during the Program
- **Any time** the host family does not know the parents at the home where the student will stay for a sleep-over, the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form
  - Independent Party Receiving Acceptance Form for Independent Student Travel
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with School, Church, Clubs, or any other Independent Party during the Program
- **Any time** the student plans to travel overnight outside the host community with someone who is not the host parent (e.g. another family, band director, church youth group, etc.), the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form

- Independent Party Receiving Acceptance Form for Independent Student Travel
- Natural Parent Release for Travel with School, Church, Clubs, or any other Independent Party during the Program
- **Any time** the student plans to travel overnight **outside of the United States** with someone who is not the host parent (e.g. another host family, band director, church youth group, etc.), the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form
  - Independent Party Receiving Acceptance Form for Independent Student Travel – signed by the responsible adult or chaperone
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with School, Church, Clubs, or any other Independent Party during the Program
  - DS-2019 Form

### ***Overnight Travel with the Natural Parents***

**NOTE:** Visits with the natural parents are discouraged until the end of the student's program. Students are not permitted to return to their home country during their stay unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. a death in the immediate family). Travel to their home country would need to be specifically approved by the Travel Director as well as the Program Director in the student's home country.

- **Any time** the student wants to travel overnight with their natural parents within the United States, the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with Natural Parents
- **Any time** the student wants to travel overnight with their natural parents outside of the United States, the student must submit:
  - Travel Proposal Form
  - Host Parent Permission Form
  - Natural Parent Release for Travel with Natural Parents
  - DS-2019 Form

**To find the forms listed above please go to [www.nacelopendoor.org/hosting\\_travel.htm](http://www.nacelopendoor.org/hosting_travel.htm). Each student should be in possession of his/her own DS-2019 form.**

Students are not allowed to travel in cars with anyone under 25 years of age if traveling outside of the host family community. Outside of the host family community is defined as more than 30 miles from the host family home.

### **Spending Money**

Students are asked to bring approximately \$250 in spending money per month.

- Going over each monetary unit with your student will help him/her understand the value of each piece. At first it may seem like “play money” and may take awhile to get used to.

- You may also want to help your student budget his/her spending money during the stay by planning in advance how much money will be needed for special activities such as school athletic fees, a yearbook, prom, etc. Suggest an amount of money for your student to bring when going somewhere in particular, as they may not know how much to budget.

If you want to treat your student to something once or twice, always mention, “I’m treating you this time.” If not, your student may incorrectly assume that you are always willing to pay. Don’t hesitate to ask your student to pay for their admission fee to a movie or another outing, when appropriate. Remember, students bring spending money to cover these types of expenses.

While the student is expected to use personal spending money for snacks or treats when out with family or friends, all regular meals are to be provided by the host parents, whether at home or in a restaurant. Nacel Open Door exchange students are expected to pay for their own school lunches if they want to buy them at school, but they must have the option to make a lunch to bring with them, and this food must be provided by the host family. Nacel Open Door host families are still responsible for providing the student with room and board.

**Exchange students are expected to pay for:**

- Postage
- Personal phone calls
- Photography film and development
- Souvenirs and snacks when out with family and friends
- Museum and amusement park admissions
- Any additional personal expenses (toiletries, clothing, gifts, etc.) Some students bring extra money specifically to buy something they know is less expensive in the U.S.

Host families are not expected to take responsibility for student phone bills or cell phones. Adding a student to your cell phone plan could be problematic. It may be very helpful to discuss phone use and payment arrangements with your student at the very beginning of the stay. Be sure your student understands that the phone should not be used without your permission. If you experience problems with unauthorized phone use, please contact your local representative or coordinator.

We do not recommend that you lend money to your student. This could lead to misunderstandings and hurt feelings. If students need additional spending money, they can ask their parents to provide it. If possible, students should open bank accounts in their own name upon arrival in their host communities.

## Important Rules

**PLEASE NOTE: Violation of any of the following Nacel Open Door rules will result in discipline up to, and including, repatriation.**

**Drinking:** Students are NOT ALLOWED to consume alcoholic beverages during their exchange program. Youth from other countries may be permitted to drink wine and beer in their

home country, so don't be surprised if students say they are used to having wine or beer. However, they are not of legal drinking age in the United States and are not permitted to consume alcohol under any circumstances. Alcohol consumption is grounds for repatriation.

**Smoking:** Smoking is NOT ALLOWED for students during their Nacel Open Door exchange program. Smoking on program is grounds for repatriation.

**Drug Use:** Any student who becomes involved with drug use will be repatriated. Drug use by any member of the American host family will necessitate moving the student to another host family. The student must not associate with any persons involved in illegal drug use or drug trafficking.

**Driving:** Students are NOT ALLOWED to operate ANY motor vehicle. This includes recreational vehicles and farm equipment as well as cars and motorcycles. **Do not add your student to your automobile insurance.** Driving a vehicle is grounds for repatriation. Students are not allowed to participate in Driver's Education courses while on program.

**Seatbelt Use:** In accordance with most state laws, and most importantly, to prevent serious injury in case of an accident, we require that students wear their seatbelts while traveling by car.

**Sexual Activity:** Students are to abstain from all sexual behavior and activity. Any student found to be sexually active, pregnant, or responsible for a pregnancy will be repatriated.

Additional program rules are included as an insert in the host family packet.

## ***Family Rules***

Nacel Open Door expects host families to set reasonable rules of their own and expects students to follow them. Plan to discuss your family's rules the day or so after your student's arrival. It may be helpful to make notes of your schedule and expectations. Be sure to discuss:

- **Meal times:** Explain your family's schedule and whether snacks are acceptable between meals.
- **Daily chores:** Students have agreed to help with chores, such as making their bed, clearing the table, picking up belongings, putting dirty clothes in the hamper, etc.
  - Please indicate to your student where to put dirty clothes. As some students may be hesitant to give you their personal items, it is best to indicate a place where they should leave them rather than asking that they give them to you. If you give the student permission to use your laundry facilities, be sure to explain how to use your washer and dryer and which products to use in what quantities!
- **Occasional tasks:** Other household tasks that your student could help out with might include bringing in the mail, folding laundry, vacuuming, carrying groceries, cleaning their room, etc.
- **Sleeping hours and curfew:** In many countries, it is quite common for people to stay up much later than we do in the United States. Set reasonable times in accordance with your

own family, and if you don't have any teenagers, talk to friends with teens for suggestions.

- **Dating:** Foreign teenagers often go out in groups, as opposed to dating in the American sense. Nacel Open Door does not encourage dating, but it can be allowed if you feel comfortable with the situation. You should use your best judgment, as you would with your own children.
- **Computer and Cell Phone Usage:** Computer and cell phone use should not be excessive, especially if it is preventing your student from adapting to school or spending time with your family. It is important that you discuss rules and expectations with your student regarding computers and cell phones, and students are expected to abide by their host family's rules pursuant to household computer and cell phone use.

### **Help your student follow your rules...**

It's okay to treat your student like a guest for the first few days while he/she is recovering from jet lag, but start treating him/her as a member of the family as soon as possible.

There are some family rules that are learned and understood over time, and they won't be evident to your student. Therefore, when situations arise, these subtle rules will have to be explained. For example, one unspoken rule may be: Don't eat the last piece of cake before asking if anyone else would like it. These "rules" vary from family to family.

Communicate openly with your student, letting him/her know when your family is happy or displeased with his/her conduct. Remember to make sure that your student knows what you expect. Please inform your local representative if your student is not following the rules you've established for them. We need to know about problems in order to help you resolve them.

## **Nacel Open Door's Support Network**

Everyone involved with Nacel Open Door wants the home-stay to be a good experience for both host families and students. You or your student may want to talk to someone during the stay. Our support network exists to provide lines of communication for questions, comments, and concerns. Your local representative should provide their telephone and e-mail address as well as contact information for the state or regional coordinator in your area. The Nacel Open Door team is available to discuss **any** topic, large or small. Feel free to contact:

- Your Nacel Open Door local representative
- Your Nacel Open Door coordinator
- Nacel Open Door national advisors
- Nacel Open Door national office staff

If you are unable to reach your local representative or coordinator, you may contact the Nacel Open Door national office at 1-651-686-0080 or 1-800-622-3553 or via e-mail at **request@nacelopendoor.org**.

The U.S. Department of State oversees secondary school student exchange programs and has established a toll free phone number for students and host families as an additional means of support (1-866-283-9090). For more information, please refer to the Department of State welcome letter to host families, which has been included in your host family packet.

### ***National Advisor's Role***

In the best interest of our students' success and well being, our Nacel Open Door support network also includes national advisors. These trained, experienced, and professional Nacel Open Door team members are dedicated to assisting students with questions, concerns, and issues that require special attention or need to be escalated beyond the host family, local representative, and/or coordinator. They are also the liaisons responsible for any necessary communication between the student/host family and the foreign country director/natural parents. National advisors will work to keep both the Nacel Open Door national office and the student's foreign director apprised of issues, as needed. The national advisors are also responsible for reinforcing the standards, rules, and guidelines of our programs and will deal with discipline, probation, and repatriation incidents as they arise.

### ***Addressing a Concern***

If you are uncomfortable with your student's behavior at any time, please address the issue immediately by talking directly with your student and by contacting a Nacel Open Door representative. You should not hesitate or feel embarrassed about addressing a concern. When an experience relies on human relations, it is natural that situations requiring diplomacy and understanding may arise. Unhappy situations should not be ignored, as this would only defeat the purpose of this program. We want to help, and we need to be made aware of a concern in order to be helpful.

At a minimum, your local representative is **required** to contact your family and your student **monthly**, by phone or in person, to monitor the exchange experience. Please do not consider this an intrusion. It is a U.S. Department of State regulation that we take very seriously, and also one of the best ways we have to ensure that things are going well for your family and your student. **Please inform the Nacel Open Door national office if you are not being contacted monthly.**

## **Insurance Information**

### ***Insurance Coverage***

Most students are covered by an illness and accident insurance policy up to \$500,000 through Chartis (formerly AIG) while on the program. However, students from Germany with Nacel's partner organization called Eurovacances (GEE) and students from select European countries with Nacel's partner organization EF have different insurance plans. These partner organizations supply their own insurance plans and provide these students with detailed insurance brochures. If you are hosting a student with one of these alternate insurance plans, an appropriate insurance overview will be included in your host family packet based on your student's country of origin. If you have any questions about your student's insurance, please feel free to contact the Nacel Open Door national office.

**The information that follows applies only to students on the Nacel Open Door insurance plan through Chartis.**

**Expenses NOT covered by Nacel's Chartis insurance policy include, but are not limited to:**

- *routine physical exams*
- *immunizations*
- *medical care for preexisting conditions*
- *plastic surgery*
- *physical therapy*
- *eye, dental, and chiropractic care (except as needed as a result of a covered accident)*
- *psychiatric care*
- *use of drugs not prescribed by a physician*

In case of any illness or accident, please do exactly as you would for your own son or daughter. You should be in possession of the medical release form signed by the student's natural parents (sent to you in the student application included in the host family packet). Please take this along should you need to take your student to a doctor or hospital. Also be aware that someone away from home is often uneasy about receiving medical care in unfamiliar surroundings.

Your student should also have an insurance card (included in their orientation folder), which should be presented to the medical provider. The card includes the group policy number and a 24-hour toll-free coverage assistance phone number for the insurance company. If your student has not received an insurance card, please call the Nacel Open Door national office at 1-800-622-3553, and a new card will be sent to your student at your home address. Medical providers may also call the national office to verify insurance coverage.

**Please ask that any bills be sent to the Nacel Open Door national office in St. Paul, MN.**

Bills should never be sent to the student's address in their home country, as this only complicates and prolongs the payment process. Simply follow the instructions in the following section on completing and submitting a Medical Claim Form. Feel free to contact your local representative or coordinator if you have any questions.

**IMPORTANT:** If your student needs to be hospitalized or receives treatment for a major illness or injury:

- Please notify your Nacel Open Door local representative or coordinator immediately.
- If you are unable to contact your local representative or coordinator, contact the Nacel Open Door national office.
- If there is a serious medical emergency and you are not able to contact Nacel Open Door, please contact the insurance company directly at the number indicated on your student's insurance card.
- When a student is to be admitted to the hospital, the hospital should communicate directly with the insurance company regarding medical records, billing, and any other factors pertaining to a student's hospital stay, including contacting the insurance company directly in order to open a case file on the student.

## ***Instructions for Medical Claim Form***

- Ideally, **medical providers** should bill Nacel Open Door directly by sending either the **(red & white) *original* HCFA 1500 or UB92 form to the national office**. The insurance company will then pay the doctor or hospital, unless an original “paid” receipt accompanying the bills shows that reimbursement should be made to the host family or the student.
- In the rare case where the provider will not accept the conditions of insurance and insists on immediate payment, be sure to **secure an original receipt for any payment you make. Also secure a statement of diagnosis and treatment for the student (the HCFA 1500 or UB92 form)**. Make copies for your records and submit these **original** documents along with your claim form to the national office.
- Chartis does not offer online billing for prescriptions, so prescriptions must be paid for by the student out-of-pocket initially. For **prescription reimbursement** to the student or the host family, save the original receipt that is stapled to the prescription bag and shows the student’s name and address, doctor’s name, prescription description, and date. This **original receipt must be sent with a completed claim form** to the Nacel Open Door national office in order to receive reimbursement. The prescription will not be reimbursed until the doctor’s statement of diagnosis and treatment has also been received by Nacel Open Door and approved as a “covered expense.”
- You may want to **make a few copies of the claim form** before completing it, in case you have additional bills to submit at a later date. If necessary, additional claim forms can be obtained from your local representative, coordinator, or the Nacel Open Door web site.
- You and your student should **complete all parts of the claim form**. Make sure that you **correctly spell your student’s first and last names**. (Do not use nicknames or a student’s “American” name.)
- **The insurance claim form should be sent to the Nacel Open Door national office at the address indicated below**. Originals of the appropriate bills, statements, and/or receipts should be attached. (*Please note that fax, photo, and carbon copies are not acceptable and cannot be processed.*)
- **For your future reference, please make a photocopy** of your completed claim form and any original bills, receipts, etc., prior to mailing them to the national office.
- **Please mail all insurance claims to:**
  - Nacel Open Door
  - 380 Jackson St., Ste. 200
  - St. Paul, MN 55101
  - Attn: Student Health Insurance

### ***Instructions for Medical Care not Covered by Insurance***

- **PLEASE READ THE INSURANCE CERTIFICATE CAREFULLY CONCERNING THE COVERAGE AVAILABLE TO YOUR STUDENT THROUGH THIS POLICY.**

Should your student require medical care for expenses not covered by the policy, such as preexisting conditions (e.g., allergies, acne, chronic heart problems, etc.), eye care, glasses, dental care (above the maximum allowed), or any other type of excluded treatment, agreement must be obtained from the student's natural parents, who are responsible for the cost of such treatment. Your coordinator can assist in obtaining this consent for you. (If agreement is obtained for such care, an original bill showing the complete name of the student and the nature of the services performed must be sent to the Nacel Open Door national office at the address given in the previous section.)

- Please Note: Exclusions on the Insurance Certificate are explicit. However, **if the doctor's diagnosis leaves a question regarding coverage, confirmation of coverage must be obtained before further medical treatment is received.** Inquiries regarding coverage must be directed to Nacel Open Door, and we will obtain determination of coverage from the insurance company.

### ***Emergency Medical Return Insurance***

The medical insurance company will pay the expense for emergency repatriation to the student's home country if required as a result of a covered accident or illness. The repatriation must be ordered by a physician and approved by the insurance company.

Nacel Open Door will coordinate with Chartis insurance to organize and pay for the return flight in the case of a death in your student's immediate family. The cost of a return trip for any other reason would be the responsibility of the student's natural parents, and the trip would be subject to approval by Nacel Open Door.

A summary of general medical insurance information for the Chartis insurance plan, a medical claim form, and a copy of the Chartis insurance policy are included in the host family packet. If you have any questions regarding insurance, please contact your local representative, coordinator, or the Nacel Open Door national office. When in doubt, ask!

### **Departure**

After successful completion of a semester or academic year program stay, students are expected to return to their home country. **Program extensions through the summer are not an option.** (The only program extension facilitated by Nacel Open Door is for a semester student who has received all necessary approvals to remain on the program for the full academic year.) However, any student who completes the program has a 30-day grace period beyond the program end date indicated on their DS-2019 form. Special permission must be granted by the natural parents in order for a student to return independently on a date other than the program end date.

The student and his/her natural parents will be responsible for all costs and liability if they choose to depart independently. Many students opt to travel with their natural families within the U.S. upon completion of their program and during the grace period. During the 30-day grace period, students should not plan to travel outside of the U.S. as they will not be allowed to re-enter the country. Nacel Open Door recommends that students depart from the U.S. a few days prior to the end of the grace period to avoid any immigration issues in the event of unforeseen travel delays. If a student withdraws from the program or is sent home for any reason, the 30-day grace period does not apply. Students must depart from the U.S. immediately. If you have any questions about student departures, please contact the national office for clarification.

Due to time differences, flights to many other countries often arrive at their final destination the day following departure. Your student may have the date of arrival at home in mind, and that date may differ from the actual date of departure from the United States. Please carefully check all return travel information you receive. Mark your calendar with the date and time of departure for YOUR area as well as all airline information and flight numbers. Return flights should be confirmed several days prior to departure by calling each airline on your student's flight itinerary. Students often have multiple flights, typically on more than one airline.

When confirming return flights, always inquire about luggage limits, fees, and restrictions with each airline. Limits often vary by airline and may differ for a domestic vs. international flight. Overweight luggage can be very costly, and some airlines are very strict. Even one pound over the limit can result in significant charges. Overweight luggage fees are your student's responsibility. It may be more cost effective for your student to ship some things home before departing. Many airlines now charge a fee for any checked luggage. The student is responsible for covering this cost.

Make sure your student remembers his/her passport and plane ticket/flight information. These items should be packed in a bag that will not be checked. Remind your student to put breakables or valuables in a carry-on bag.

## **Evaluation**

At the end of your student's stay you will receive an evaluation form from the Nacel Open Door national office. Please take a few moments to complete it with your comments and suggestions. Your input is very valuable as we plan for future programs. Your student and the school they attended will also receive an evaluation.

**Thank you again for your kindness and generosity in opening your home to an exchange student. Your participation in our exchange programs is greatly appreciated!**