Best Practices in Homestay Management

Doug Ronson
ESQ Educational Services

Languages Canada presentation
March 2015

Overview

- Host family recruitment
- Host family retention
- Host training
- Student orientation
- Conflict resolution
- Leveraging technology to manage your program

Host family recruitment

What recruiting strategies have you found to be most effective?

Host family recruitment

- Successful recruitment is an ongoing process
- Need to budget time for recruitment – it's easy to get caught up in the latest student emergency
- Leverage student interests to recruit potential hosts: soccer, music, theatre. Contact local organizations
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- Ask existing hosts to recommend a friend/relative
- Religious leaders may know potential families
- Local service organizations: Ask to give a talk at a meeting

Host family selection

What procedures do you follow at your school?

Host family selection

- Conduct an initial screening by phone. Saves time by quickly eliminating hosts that are unsuitable
- Explain application process and expectations in detail. This ensures that families are serious about hosting
- Have family complete an application
- Conduct home visit and meeting
- References and police checks

Host family orientation

What kind of orientation do you offer for hosts?

Host family orientation

The language program at Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington delivers a five-hour orientation meeting:

- College policies
- Student expectations
- Culture shock
- Information about culture in various countries

Edmonds uses the meeting as part of the application process – it helps families determine if hosting is truly for them.

Host family orientation resources

The Essential Guide for Host Families can be a valuable resource for hosts:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Communication
- Household appliances
- Telephone and internet
- Boyfriends/girlfriends

…. And more
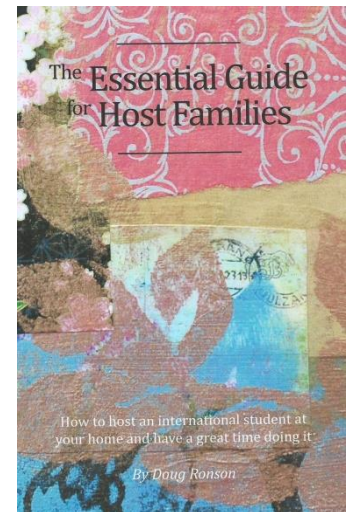
Host family retention

It's far easier to retain a host family than recruit a new one

Host family retention

- A robust orientation program ensures that hosts are well-prepared to host a student
- Check in frequently to support hosts
- Conduct exit survey/interview with hosts after student leaves
- "Thank you" notes make people feel appreciated
- Watch for signs of burnout. Offer support or suggest that the hosts take a break for a month or two

Student orientation

How do you prepare students for a successful homestay?

Student orientation

A good student orientation program should discuss:

- Realistic expectations
- Communications styles in Canada
- Family life in Canada
- Culture shock and adaptation
- Reaching out for help
- Safety in the home and the community
- Boyfriends/girlfriends

Student orientation

Types of orientation programs:

- Student meetings

- Provide homestay resources in advance or at meeting

- Video

Resources for student orientation

The Essential Guide for Homestay Students

- Sixty-page guide
- Available in 8 versions: Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish
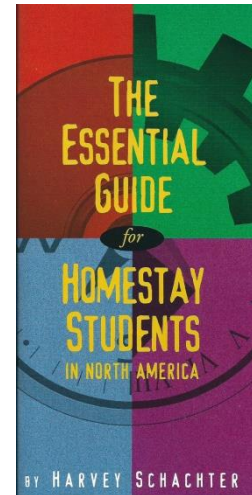
Conflict resolution

*What are your ideas for preventing
and resolving conflicts in homestays?*

Conflict resolution

- Training and orientation can help prevent conflicts
- Understanding cultural differences
- Encourage hosts and students to work out issues
- Deal with issues before they start to fester
- Advise hosts to "pick their battles"
- Communicate in person – avoid texting and email
- If you do need to intervene, remain calm and respectful. Encourage both parties to forgive and move on

Leveraging program management tools

Language school management software can save you time and improve the effectiveness of your program:

- Store info and photos about each host family. The software can email this info directly to the student

- Manage host and student preferences: vegetarian food, pets, children, proximity to school

- Cut administrative time to allow you to work more with students and hosts

Leveraging program management tools

Thank you!

Doug Ronson

douglasronson@yahoo.ca

613-888-9560

www.homestayguide.com