

HOW ARE HOST FAMILIES CHOSEN?

This is a frequently-asked question and one that we take very seriously. Understandably, parents of Xperitas students want to be assured that care and consideration are given to the process of finding suitable host families.

In each community where families host our students, Xperitas has a family stay coordinator. This person is often a teacher or someone else in the community who has access to local schools and parent-teacher organizations through which he or she establishes contact and announces the opportunity to host a visiting teenager. In the great majority of cases our coordinators have been doing this work for a number of years.

It is significant to note that our host families are volunteers. Host families in Latin America receive a small stipend to cover food and bottled water but are considered volunteers as well. This is an important distinction from typical room-and-board arrangements whereby some companies hire and pay families to host two or three students. Since our host families are not paid, their primary incentive is a genuine desire to host a visiting student and to share an enriching cross-cultural experience.

Families who host must complete an application form in which they provide references and information about themselves. The family stay coordinator reviews each application, decides on the suitability of each family and ensures that sleeping arrangements are appropriate and accommodations are in line with Xperitas standards.

The main criteria for families to host an Xperitas student are that the family has the means to host (the student should be provided meals and have his or her own bed and own room if gender is different from host sibling) and a strong interest in hosting. They are expected to provide a safe and caring environment for the duration of the stay. If the host family does not have a teenager, contact with teenage peers may naturally occur through neighbors, relatives, or friends of the family. It is important to remember that interaction need not be peer-to-peer to create a meaningful bond.

The visiting student is to be treated as a member of the family, subject to the normal rules of the household. To allow for maximum opportunity to become integrated into the everyday life of the host family, families are not expected to arrange special excursions, and group activities with the other visiting students are not encouraged during the family stay. The visiting student is expected to adapt to the family and its daily routine.



Every family is unique and every family stay situation is different. The only expectation should be that the visiting student will be immersed in the everyday life of a local family. It is important to consider that a typical family can take many forms, such as a traditional nuclear family, a single parent home, empty nesters, etc. Attending school may be an option, but can't be guaranteed.

In the unlikely event that there is cause to move the student to a different host family, it is the student's responsibility to contact the group leader so that an appropriate remedy can be found. If this should occur, the local coordinator will be involved in and will lead the process. The group leader will be made aware and the student's parents notified. As always, the safety and welfare of our students is our top priority.

There is an expectation that the host family will comply with the norms of the program. At the same time, there is an expectation that the student will do his/her part to make the homestay a success by practicing daily courtesies, demonstrating interest in things new and different, engaging in conversation, not retreating to the privacy of his/her room, and not unfairly comparing the host family with his/her family back home or with friends' host families.

Before the group's departure we will communicate to the group leader the following information about the host families: name, address, email (when available), telephone and/or cell phone number, occupations of the parents, and the number of boys and girls in the household, if any, and their respective ages. In some cases the host family may reach out to the visiting student first, but it is perfectly acceptable for the visiting student to make the first contact. If a response is not received within a week or two, please contact us so that we can verify the family's contact information.

While no one can offer absolute guarantees about an experience as personal and subjective as this one, we have the utmost confidence in our family stay coordinators. We rely on the goodwill of everyone involved and on their honest, full disclosure when filling out Host Family and Family Stay Applications. The overwhelming majority of our students continue to rate their family stays very positively and many say it was the best, most rewarding part of the program.

