



HOST A STUDENT, OPEN YOUR WORLD.

TCC Homestay Program | 2025-2026
Handbook for a Successful Cultural Exchange



Tacoma Community College appreciates the participation of students and hosts in the Homestay program. This exchange is the basis for true global education.

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Dear Homestay Family,

Welcome to the International Homestay Program at Tacoma Community College! To our families, thank you for opening your home and your heart to provide our international students with a safe and enriching living experience during their time at TCC. And to our students, thank you for your interest in experiencing real American life in homestay.

Tacoma Community College has a long standing tradition of connecting international students to families in our local community. For over 45 years, our team has dedicated its resources and expertise to ensure that our international students have an opportunity to experience American culture through their homestay while pursuing their educational goals.

The information in this handbook is intended to get you started as an international host and student and to provide you with practical tips and practices that will help you to establish a welcoming and engaging homestay experience. We value our host families and students and we are committed to working with you to ensure that homestay is an enjoyable and meaningful opportunity for all involved.

If you have questions or need assistance getting started, please feel free to contact us by email or phone. We genuinely hope your experience as a homestay host provides you and your family with cherished memories and close ties to the homestay community at TCC.

Sincerely,

Rachel McGovern

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THE PROGRAM

The International Homestay Program at Tacoma Community College was founded in 1979 in response to the growing needs of international students for alternative forms of housing. At that time, apartment living was the only option for those with no friends or family in the area. The Homestay Program has made it much easier for students to integrate into American life. The program was very successful and grew rapidly. Within two years, a full-time coordinator was hired and Homestay became an integral part of the services offered for international students.

The International Housing staff works within the division of International Student Services and Programs (ISSP). They are responsible for processing housing applications, screening and training potential hosts, arranging airport pick-up, matching students and hosts, and providing general support to both the student and host.

The matching of students and hosts is central to the success of the program. The goal of this process is to pair hosts with students who have compatible interests and personalities. While we do have applications deadlines and consider applications in order, there are many factors and it is not always first come, first serve. We consider intangible things like personality and lifestyle in addition to concrete things like dietary needs and pet allergies. We must also consider gender and meal plan requests as well. At times, we may have multiple rooms available for female students requesting full meal plans, but a waitlist for male students. This means that the wait for a student varies. Hosts are not guaranteed a student placement every quarter or a certain number of students every quarter. Similarly, students are not always guaranteed a host family even if they apply early.

The homestay program is available to current international students at Tacoma Community College. This means the student carries a passport from a different country and will be attending TCC on an F1 student visa. Immigrant students or students from other countries who have a U.S. passport may be considered if space is available, but preference is given to students attending on a student visa.

Hosts may be certified by other programs, but TCC prefers that hosts not simultaneously host those students and Tacoma Community College students. Differing program rules and expectations have caused conflicts in the past. It is important that the college is able to offer assurances that all host participants have been screened and approved by Tacoma Community College. Cooperation with these standards enables the college to maintain a high standard of service. The housing staff has the discretion to dismiss any student or host from the program for non-compliance with requirements.

“The coordinator’s role is not to make each student and host family perfectly happy and in love with each other, but to provide an experience, unlike any other, from which students and host families can learn to live together in peace and grow facing their problems”

(Peace Corps)



THE HOSTS

Many students only know the U.S. from movies or TV. This creates an image of an “American Family” which is a stereotype. Our hosts reflect the people who live in our community. There is no ‘typical’ American family.

Tacoma Community College Homestay welcomes ALL community members wishing to share their lives with our students. Although each home is different, all hosts are kind, generous and curious about people from other countries. They are looking to host international students to gain cultural experiences rather than additional income. They are happy to have students share their lives and be active members of their households. **English is not always the 1st language of some hosts, but it must be the primary language spoken in the home.**



For hosts, living with an international student is a unique educational experience. It is a great chance to learn about other ways of life and to view the United States from the perspective of someone from another culture. Hosts must always be

aware that they are acting as ambassadors and have great influence on opinions that international students form about our country. Being a host is more than being a landlord and we discourage hosts we think only want income. At the same time, hosts are not guardians or replacement parents. The expectation is that hosts are more like mentors and guides.

To be considered for the program, hosts attend a homestay orientation then submit an application which includes two references. TCC will conduct a background check on all adults over 18 living in the home or frequently visiting. When all those steps are complete a staff member will visit the home and the surrounding neighborhoods.

HOST EXPECTATIONS

TCC prefers hosts to live within a 60-minute commute by public transit or approximately a 20 minute walk from campus. Students usually request homes that are closer to TCC but many other variables are considered. Many students accept longer commutes for homes that meet specific requests, are near other attractions, or based on compatibility with the family.

Hosts are not expected to drive student everywhere, but they should be familiar with the bus routes and be able to teach them to their students. It is especially helpful for hosts to do a practice ride or two with students before they ride the bus on their own.

Families may host more than one student, but all students in a home must be of the same gender and on the same meal plan. With homestay approval, we may allow some exceptions such as family members of opposite genders studying abroad together. We prefer that TCC hosts only host TCC students, but may make some exceptions for hosts who accept students through non-college programs like high school or church. If a host has other international students from TCC or other colleges, we may discontinue sending TCC homestay students to that host.

The primary foundation of hosting is quality interaction, support, and culture sharing. Hosts must understand that this is much more than being a landlord or feeding an extra person. In addition to abiding by program rules, hosts should expect to share their lives with students but also learn from the students. Hosts may be called upon to offer opinions on many issues related to daily life in the US. Most importantly, however, they provide a stable, friendly environment for students.

Hosts strive to make students feel safe, comfortable and cared for. They are asked to treat students as members of the family, but are not meant to act as parents. They are not expected to monitor the student's academic progress or daily activities outside the home. Successful hosts treat students with respect and strive to communicate honestly and clearly. The most successful hosts also focus on day-to-day relationship building and not just grand gestures and fun stuff. The strongest relationships grow from little conversations over dinner, watching shows together, and just being present.

The students' number one priority is their studies, but they are responsible for following the house rules, cleaning up after themselves, and helping to make the home a pleasant environment. Hosts may assign small chores to students but students should never be responsible for major chores such as cleaning the entire house, baby-sitting, or caring for pets. The primary focus is to provide students with a place where they can learn, feel supported, and above all, provide an environment where they can **sleep and study safely**.

THE STUDENTS

Students come from a variety of cultural backgrounds with ages ranging from 16 years and older. Nearly 40 countries have been represented in TCC homestay over time, with many coming from Asian countries. TCC Homestay has been hosting mostly students from China, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Kenya and Myanmar over the last few years.

Reasons for joining homestay as opposed to finding an apartment vary. For students under the age of 18, homestay is often the only option. Some students want to improve their English speaking skills and learn about American culture, while others believe homestay offers safety and security. As rent and utility prices rise, homestay is often much more budget friendly for students as well. The apartment search can also be complicated and overwhelming for a new international student so they choose homestay as a transition to the Tacoma area.

International students come to TCC through either a short-term program (STP) or as degree seeking students who may be here for just one quarter up to multiple years. Most degree seeking students intend to graduate with an Associate's degree and transfer to a university. We currently have short term

partnerships with schools in both Japan and Denmark, including the University of Kitakyushu (UKK) in Tacoma's sister city Kitakyushu, Japan.

TCC begins matching student with their homestay families after arrival has been confirmed. This could be anywhere from 4 weeks before student arrive or as early as the day of arrival. Due to the need to place some students quickly, we expect hosts to respond clearly and quickly. If a timely response isn't given staff may move to another host. This doesn't take you off of our host list but rather places students in a timely manner.

Homestay staff uses the application information provided by both hosts and students to make a match. For this reason, we encourage both parties to be candid on their application. Host will be given a Homestay agreement to sign before a student is placed with them. Students agree to live with the selected home and abide by host guidelines and program rules. New students are required to sign a Homestay Agreement. Homestay is a quarter-by-quarter commitment for both hosts and students. Many students prefer to stay in homestay for their entire time at TCC and may stay with the same family for years.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students have to understand that homestay is more than just renting a room. They will adjust to the daily routine and schedule of the host as a family member would. Students don't have special privileges. Remember: "Be a family member, not a renter."



In order to have the privilege of living with a host, students are obligated to treat the members of the household with respect. They are committed to follow the homestay program guidelines, as well as household guidelines. We continuously reinforce that honesty and communication are essential to their success and happiness.

Whenever a student has a concern about their homestay, our first question is "did you already talk with your host?" Sometimes it takes courage to ask questions or to talk about a sensitive subject. It is important for students and hosts to try to be open. The Housing Staff is available to help. Unless it is an emergency or health concern, discussion and mediation are always the first step. We do not allow homestay changes for at least 2 weeks after arrival. Moving a student from homestay is only considered as a last resort.

In addition to respecting the family, it is important for students to respect the home. Students should inform their hosts if they have broken or damaged something by accident. Students can be held responsible to pay the cost to repair or replace the item.

Students are required to sign a homestay agreement during orientation week. We encourage students to ask hosts about the expectations and rules for each homestay. We also expect student to use and check their TCC email regularly. This is the main way staff are able to communicate with students. Students receive a quarterly email requesting their intention for the next quarter, if students do not respond, we may be unable to accommodate vacation rates or last-minute move requests.

DIVERSITY COMMITMENT

Tacoma Community College is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion and the creation of a campus community that reflects the larger community around us. This includes efforts to increase and foster diversity among students, staff, and faculty while promoting intercultural engagement and developing a multi-cultural worldview using collaborative engagement.

Homestay is a place where these goals shine. The foundation of TCC Homestay is to provide international students with a comfortable and supportive place to learn new cultures and broaden their worldview, while hosts similarly learn from the students. We remain committed to seeking and supporting the same diversity and inclusion within our host family partners as the college demonstrates with students, faculty, and staff.

At the same time, we recognize that homestay involves much more than classroom learning or campus workshops. These interactions are almost always rewarding in many ways, but can also be mentally and emotionally challenging. Hosts and students need to be open to this process, but also need a place they can reflect and decompress and just be in the moment.

PLACEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The homestay process has more in common with a matchmaking service than a traditional college or work application. We ask questions about hobbies and diet needs but also questions that might not be comfortable or expected. This might include topics like religious beliefs, sexual orientation, primary language spoken in the home, ethnic background. Disclosure of this information is voluntary and not meant to exclude or prioritize any particular group. Our incoming students are as diverse as our community so the more information we have, the better homestay matches we can make. A host or student who holds certain beliefs or identities will not be denied or excluded, but it may influence placements as we strive to make a good match and reduce potential conflict in the home.

Best practices guide our placement considerations for making matches and assigning students. These are not always hard and fast rules so there is still room for context and extenuating circumstances.

- Comfort and safety for both our host and our student is the first priority.
- Homes with multiple students will (generally) only have students of the same gender. We try to avoid placing students with the same native language in the same home. Similarly, we would avoid placing students with families that share the same native language if possible.
- Hosts with young children can host either gender but once the children become teenagers, placement will usually be limited to the same gender as the oldest child. This is also considered for single adults in the home such as adult children or siblings of the hosts.

PREPARATION FOR HOMESTAY

Once you are matched, student and host should start communicating with each other before arrival day. Using e-mails, chat, and/or video calls is a great way to learn about each other by asking questions before meeting in person. This is also a great way for parents of younger students to meet the host as well.

When people from different backgrounds decide to live together, it is important that they first take time to learn about one another. Television and movies rarely portray real life, so a little research may be needed to discover what other countries are really like. Once there is basic knowledge and understanding upon which to build, successful relationships can be created and maintained through clear communication, flexibility, and respect for new perspectives.

Both students and hosts can experience culture shock. Participants initially feel excited, happy, and a little nervous. As time passes, they may begin to feel a bit anxious about some of the challenges they encounter. Gradually, things which had been sources of frustration become sources of humor as everyone becomes more relaxed. In the end, participants are better able to respect differences. Culture shock is addressed in this handbook as well as additional reading resources to help with understanding other cultures.

ARRIVAL, AIRPORT PICK UP & ORIENTATION

International students are allowed to enter the US up to 30 days before school activities begin. TCC has scheduled [arrival days](#) each quarter 1-2 days before new student orientation. If a student would like to move-in before the scheduled arrival days, they must request this with the Housing Staff and get approval from the host.

TCC offers airport pick-ups on assigned arrival days only. The Housing Staff will arrange for a college representative to greet the students at the Seattle/Tacoma International Airport during arrival days only. All students will be met at the international arrival terminal. If students arrive outside of the assigned arrival time, they will have to provide their own transportation. ***Hosts are welcome to meet students at the airport, but this is not a requirement or expectation.***

Students are provided detailed arrival day instructions before they depart. This will have information on what to expect for customs and immigration, where to meet TCC staff, and contact information if they are having trouble finding where to go. TCC staff monitor all flights and will automatically adjust for arrival changes. If a student misses a connection flight or has other issues, they should contact TCC staff right away.

From the airport, students are taken directly to their new homes. During busier arrival times, staff may ask hosts to meet on campus to pick-up their student. Typically, students are excited, but also tired and hungry. Some may feel apprehensive. Some may have difficulty speaking English due to exhaustion and stress. After students have a chance to rest, eat, and gain confidence, a normal routine can be established.

Once the student is settled, the host can go over the house rules and expectations. The host will show the student how to use appliances and other items in the house, how to care for things, how and what to clean up, explain light chores the student will have, how to use internet, etc.

HOMESTAY STYLES & FEES

The focus of homestay is supporting students and culture sharing. Hosts are mentors and guides, not landlords. Families should only become hosts because they are interested in sharing their life and culture with international students while learning about their culture. Families who see hosting as a business or are primarily focused on income may want to consider some other venue and may even have their applications denied.

At the same time, hosting should never be a financial burden. Homestay fees are to set to cover the increased costs of hosting with a little extra left over.

Homestay fees are monthly; although, students moving in or out part way through a month will have the rate adjusted based on the number of days in that month. **TCC hosts may not charge any extra fees besides the homestay fee. If you have damage, please contact us and we will assist with reimbursement/replacement arrangements.**

Homestay Options

TCC offers two different styles of homestay; **Complete Homestay** or **Partial Homestay**.

When approved by Homestay Staff, some hosts may offer shared rooms where 2 students would live in the same room, but each student has their own bed and other furniture.

	Complete Homestay Fees	Partial Homestay Fees
Single	\$1000 per month	\$750 per month
Shared	\$900 per month	\$650 per month

Complete Homestay

Complete Homestay includes three meals a day. Hosts do all the grocery shopping and prepare the evening meal at least 3-4 nights each week. Students will use provided food to prepare/pack their own breakfast and lunch each day and the remaining dinners each week. If a host decides to have dinner out rather than cooking at home, the host is responsible for paying for the meal. If the student chooses to eat out on their own for any meal, they must use their own money. Students can also be expected to pay for extra items such as between-meal snacks.

Partial Homestay

The student is responsible for buying and preparing all meals, including breakfast, lunch and dinner. Hosts will provide storage space and show the student how to use the kitchen appliances if they are unfamiliar. The host is not expected to provide food or cook for the student.

Student Amenities

The following is required regardless of meal option. Shared rooms require 2 of each furniture item.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Window and emergency egress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access to washing machine, dryer, detergent
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bed and bed linens	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper/towels
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desk & chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closet/ Storage Space	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> House key or access code
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reliable Internet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family interaction time
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working smoke/CO2 detectors in or by student room	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English conversation opportunities

Payment Method

Initial fees are due at move in and students are expected to be ready to pay hosts within a few days after arrival at most. All fees after, are due on the 1st of each month. Cash and check are the preferred options but we encourage students to ask their host what they prefer. Many hosts are now accepting electronic services such as PayPal or Venmo. International wire transfer is not recommended for monthly host payments.

Homestay Placement Fee

Students are also charged a one-time Homestay Placement Fee of \$350. This fee is charged to the student account when they accept their homestay placement for their first quarter. Payment of this fee is due together with tuition, student insurance, and any other fees and has the same due date. ***Students who leave homestay and later return do not have to pay the fee again.***

Partial Fees

Partial fees can be used in limited situations, for example when a student moves in or out during a month or when a student goes on vacation during vacation time.

Daily fee = monthly fee/number of days in the month

Vacation Fees

Students can pay a reduced rate of \$5 per day if:

- They will be gone 7 days or more in a row AND
- Remain in homestay the following quarter AND
- Notify the housing staff two weeks' prior AND
- The vacation is during a scheduled Tacoma Community College break between quarters. Students who travel during the quarter when classes are in session are not eligible for the vacation rate.



Summer Quarter

In terms of homestay, summer quarter is treated like any other quarter. Students who are taking summer off for classes but not returning home are still eligible to live with their host family as long as they are enrolled for Fall Quarter classes. They would pay the regular homestay rate but could be eligible for the vacation rate if they travel during the break between Summer and Fall classes.

Students who are taking summer off AND returning home must completely move out of their homestay. Students who do not want to travel with all of their belongings can rent a short term storage unit or leave items with friends. Students can request the same host family in Fall, but there is no guarantee as the host may decide to accept a summer student who stays for Fall.

Host families can make separate arrangements for a student to leave their belongings if he or she returns home for summer (or any other quarter) and plans to return to the same host. This is a private arrangement and TCC assumes **NO** guarantee or responsibility for the stored items if they are damaged, if the student does not return, or any other unforeseen circumstance.

THE STUDENT'S ROOM



Students should have a physical and social environment that is welcoming and comfortable.

The #1 goal of Homestay can be summarized with 5 “S” words

- **SUPPORTED**
- **SAFE**
- **SLEEP**
- **STUDY**
- **SUCCESSFUL**



Please refer to back Page 11 for what is included in the homestay fees. Hosts are expected to provide Wi-Fi for the internet service (instead of using Ethernet cable) as students will bring various devices that may or may not accept hardwired connections. A lock on the bedroom door is not required but will add to the feeling of security for some students. The room should be dedicated to the student and cannot be used by the host for storage or other purposes. It is your home but your student’s room. Please respect their privacy. When you need to enter their room communicate why to prevent suspicion or intrusion. If a student wants to decorate the room, he or she must ask the host for permission before making major changes, but hosts should be prepared to instruct students how to hang posters or other personalization.

All rooms must first be legal bedrooms per real estate guidelines. This includes a minimum of 70 square feet for a single occupancy room, at least 7’ of ceiling height, escape egress in addition to bedroom door, etc. From there the bed, desk, storage, and other homestay program requirements apply, with double occupancy requiring individual furniture items and storage for each student.

There are cultural considerations that may require some patience to help students adapt to their new environment. Some international students will not be comfortable with lower level or basement rooms as some cultures mistakenly interpret the room's location as an indication that their status in the household is separate and lower. For young Americans, these rooms are highly desired because they offer the most privacy. Students should understand that the room's location is not an insult; hosts probably believe the student would prefer more privacy, just like an American college student.



Students who feel *Supported and Safe* will *Sleep better, Study more effectively, and be more Successful.*

COMMITMENTS AND DEADLINES

Homestay placements are quarterly commitments for both the host and the student. Applying for the TCC homestay program and accepting placement constitutes acceptance of TCC homestay policy and procedure. All students have the opportunity to move out of the homestay program or to change host families (if available) at the end of each quarter, for any reason. The hosts can also request for a student to move at the end of a quarter.

If a student wants to move at the end of the quarter (or if a host would like their student to move), they should inform the Housing Staff at least 4 weeks before the end of the quarter. Students will be asked to fill out an evaluation after they leave the homestay. If a student chooses to leave the homestay before the end of the quarter, without permission of the Housing Staff, the Housing Staff will make the final decision regarding what fees the student will pay.

If the host decides to terminate the arrangement, any fees paid in advance will be refunded and no fees will be owed for the remainder of the quarter. If the commitment ends because of a policy violation, emergency, or other special circumstance, the Housing Staff will determine the final fee.

Communication is vital. Both students and hosts must inform the Housing Staff, and each other, of their plans, and any changes to their plans, in a timely manner. Students and hosts may not make their own arrangements at any time. The Housing Staff must always be involved in this process.

- 4 weeks before the end of the quarter when a student wants to move or if a host cannot host a student the following quarter.
- 2 weeks before the student or host goes on vacation to determine the vacation fees and arrangements.

HOUSEHOLD GUIDELINES

Different cultures have different standards for polite behavior. In the US, the following actions define polite behavior:

- cleaning up after yourself or guests
- speaking politely
- saying ‘thank you’
- asking permission before using something belonging to another person
- being honest (while still being polite)
- keeping promises
- respecting the beliefs of others
- being punctual



Many hosts have house rules based on these ideas in order to maintain order and good will. Before a student’s arrival, hosts should decide which household guidelines are the most important. TCC has established basic requirements that hosts must meet, but these are just the foundation. Hosts can (and should) add their own guidelines based on their specific lifestyle and comfort level. Some of the most common areas are detailed in the next section.

Partial homestay hosts should also have clear expectations on when the student can use the kitchen and how to use the stove, pots and pans.

Each household is unique, so individual hosts decide what works best for them. Hosts do not, however, have the authority to change rules regarding program fees or responsibilities. We recommend that hosts create a written document of house rules and provide this to students when they arrive. Some hosts post these on the fridge or in the student’s bedroom while others create booklets or handouts. It is the host’s responsibility to explain these guidelines to the student after the student has arrived.

Household guidelines are to be verbally understood and accepted as a way of life. Ideally, the commitment between students and hosts should be more like a family than a business. Hosts who attempt to establish an independent, contractual relationship with a student will lose the opportunity to host for the Tacoma Community College program and students will be removed from their home. Likewise, if a student chooses not to cooperate with clear, reasonable guidelines, he or she may lose the privilege of living with a host and could be removed from the home at any time. Please call the Housing Staff if there is confusion or conflict.

Communication is key to a successful host experience and a successful homestay for the student. If a student is not following a house rule, sit down with them and talk about it. Explain why the rule is important to you. Find out if they do the same thing in their country. Most issues that come up are due to cultural differences and are not intentional on the part of the student. Talking when the issue first comes up will help keep tensions from rising and will help to resolve the issue early on.

We are here to solve problems, conflicts, and miscommunication. We will be happy to assist in mediating positive conversations between host and student.

For Students:

- Remember you are entering someone else's home, not a hotel. There are no housekeeping or cleaning services.
- You will be expected to respect host and home rules, and understand they may be different than your own home.
- Remember that every host and home is different. Your host may have totally different ways than your friend's host. If there is something you don't understand or like, always talk to your host first.

For Hosts:

- Students are joining your family, not becoming renters or tenants.
- Students are expected to clean after themselves and can have basic chores, but they are not babysitters, pet sitters, or home aids.
- Students may have different standards of "clean" or not know how to use certain appliances or cleaning tools. They are not being difficult.
- Students may have low English levels to start, be patient, keep it simple, and show rather than tell as much as possible.

Since homestay involves individual students entering the homes of individual hosts, no experience is ever the same. That is part of the appeal of homestay. At the same time, there are some common issues that happen regularly. The most common of these are outlined on the next page.

ITEMS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR HOST/STUDENT



Smoking

In some countries, smoking in public areas and homes is both common and allowed. Smoking is less common in the U.S and restricted in most public areas. Smoking is **NOT** allowed inside any TCC homestay house. Some hosts may allow smoking outside in the certain areas, but many hosts do not allow smoking near the house at all and some hosts will not accept a student who smokes.



Showering

Some students may be accustomed to long showers more than once/day and may also be used to taking a bath before going to bed. It is best to discuss with each other when to take a shower, how long would be considered appropriate, etc. Some students are also used to fully “wet” shower rooms and may need an explanation on how to properly use a shower curtain and that air vents are not drains!



Food

Food is a big part of culture and often ends up being the biggest challenge in homestay. Many students are afraid of conflict or causing insult and may not effectively and or honestly communicate with their host about their preferences. Host should regularly ask student about taste preferences and encourage honesty. Cooking and shopping together is a great way to start that connection.



Cleaning

We recommend hosts show their expectations regarding cleaning instead of just explaining. Often there are different standards for cleaning. In some cultures, students are expected to only study and are not taught to clean at home. Even those who do clean, may not be familiar with different tools and chemicals.



Laundry

We recommend doing the first few loads of laundry together. Students might not know how to properly use machines we take for granted. Show them how much soap to use, what temperatures are appropriate, etc. In some cultures, it may be common to do laundry daily instead of waiting for a full load to gather. Others may only have washing machines at and are used to hanging clothes to dry.



Guests, quiet hours, and other details

Students are going to make friends at school and out in the community and they will want them to visit. Some of those friends may even be dates and significant others. Hosts should be clear if there are certain hours for guests, if there are limits on the number of guests at any one time, and if guests are allowed to stay the night. Hosts can also set rules about guests of the opposite sex/gender.



Hosts should also decide if they want to establish formal quiet hours and/or curfews. This is not meant to be a type of parental control. It is a matter of respect, especially for hosts who wake early in the morning and/or have young children.

Hosts should also consider daily routines/norms specific to your homestay. This could be where guests should park if they drive, removing shoes in the home, managing recycling versus trash. feeding (or not) of pets, or eating in specific home locations.

FOOD IDEAS

While we like to encourage students to be ready for an adventure and to keep open minds (and open palates), it's hard to overcome something that is both a habit and a comfort in the way food is. Breakfast can be a stark difference. Many students have never tried the kind of cereal that is so common in U.S. breakfasts, while many hosts would never consider rice for breakfast which is normal for many students. We encourage hosts to ask students and have conversations about what they normally eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner in their countries and then make those foods available, or even try them for themselves.

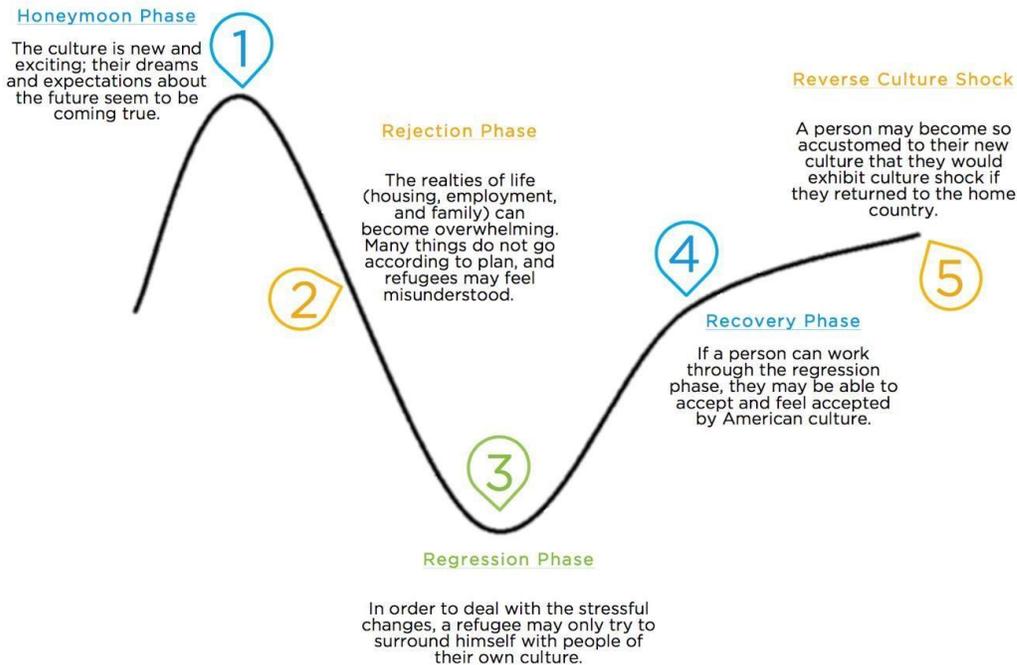
The following are tips offered from experienced hosts:

- Make a list of available breakfast and lunch items and post it on your refrigerator to avoid confusion for the student.
- Many hosts prepare the weekly shopping list with the student's help. Some hosts post the shopping list on the refrigerator and ask the student to add to it during the week.
- Ask your student what they eat in their country for breakfast, lunch, etc. Many students will not feel comfortable telling you what they want to eat. Check with your student every few weeks if they are still okay with the food you provide for breakfast. For example, do they want a different kind of cereal for a change?
- Post a monthly calendar in the kitchen. Have students mark if they are going to be home for dinner or not.
- Try to plan dinner for a specific time every evening. If this is not possible, a weekly dinner schedule posted on the refrigerator or bulletin board helps prevent confusion.
- Hosts should make the students aware that they can take food from the cupboards and refrigerator. At the same time, be sure to show them what they should not eat, such as the ingredients needed for evening dinner or tomorrow's lunch.
- Take time to explain the use of kitchen appliances such as the stove and microwave. Things which may seem obvious – like turning off the burner when finished cooking or keeping metal out of the microwave – might not occur to a student (many students have never used a microwave before for example).
- Communication is very important, because learning to eat American food is a difficult adjustment for most students. Even though it may take a little time to adapt to a new diet, students must understand they cannot expect hosts to prepare special meals to accommodate them. However, hosts and students should discuss basic likes and dislikes.
- Examples of American dinners: hamburgers, hot dogs, pizzas, pork, chicken, beef, fish, corn on the cob, salads (potato salads are very popular in the US), (mashed) potatoes, spaghetti, lasagna, burrito's, taco's, etc. Below are typical breakfast and lunch items.

Toast	Breakfast Bars
Cereal	Fruits
Pancakes	Juice
Muffins/Pastries	Tea/Coffee
Milk	Peanut Butter
Yogurt	

Sandwich	Fruits
Chips	Hummus
Crackers	Fruits
Soup	Frozen mini entrees
Rice	Instant Pasta/Noodles
Vegetables	Cookies

CULTURAL SHOCK & ADJUSTMENT



Retrieved

from: <https://worldreliefdurham.org/culture-shock>

Below are four different stages of culture shock. The length of each stage varies per student.
Excitement [Honeymoon Phase]

The individual experiences a holiday or 'honeymoon' period with their new surroundings. The students feel very positive about the culture; are overwhelmed with impressions. They find the new culture exotic and are fascinated by it. This is passive, meaning the student still has had little direct experience of the culture and may be influenced by initial expectation.

Withdrawal [Rejection Phase & Regression Phase]

The individual now has some face to face experience with the culture and starts to find things different, strange and frustrating. The student may find the behavior of people unusual and unpredictable. They may begin to dislike the culture and react negatively to the behavior. Students with extreme reactions may feel anxious; start to withdraw; begin to criticize, and/or mock or show animosity to the people around them.

Adjustment [Recovery Phase]

The individual now has a routine and/or a support system. They start feeling settled and more confident in dealing with the new culture. The student is able to understand and accept the behavior of people and start feeling less isolated and regain their sense of humor.

Enthusiasm

The individual now feels "at home". The student enjoys being in the culture; understands nuances in order to function well in the culture. They may even start to prefer certain cultural traits of the new culture rather than their own and adopt certain behaviors from the new culture.

Host families play a very important role in helping a student adjust to US culture. It is important for a student to feel comfortable in his/her homestay, and that he/she is able to ask questions. Students suffering from culture shock who do not have support risk becoming isolated and/or doing poorly in classes. If you think your student is experiencing a culture shock, there is a lot of helpful information on the internet and the International Programs Office is available to help as well.

It is very normal for students to struggle when they have to adapt to a new culture that is very different from their own. All students will experience a culture shock to some degree ranging from severe to so mild they don't even realize. Some students will find it difficult to understand what is appropriate or not. Hosts are there to help students understand the US culture. Host families are like our first responders and often see signs of severe home sickness and culture shock before the start impacting a student performance in class or attendance. Hosts also get to know students more deeply and can better see the difference between someone being naturally quiet and introverted vs being withdrawn and isolating themselves in loneliness. Below are key symptoms of a culture shock to watch for during a student's transition.

- 
- Changes in habits
 - Frustration
 - Sadness
 - Withdrawal
 - Feeling no one understands
 - Expressing lack of confidence
 - Insomnia
 - Homesickness
 - Expressing negative feelings about new culture

RECOMMENDED READING MATERIALS

"The Essential Guide for Host Families." ESQ Educational Services

[Host Guide \(homestayguide.com\)](https://www.homestayguide.com)

"Host Family Survival Kit: A Guide for American Host Families" by Nancy King and Ken Huff

[Available on Amazon: <https://goo.gl/p3goJS>]

"Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot – And Cold – Climate Cultures" by Sarah A. Lanier

[Available on Amazon: <https://goo.gl/Yfo1g4>]

"Why Culture Shock is Good For You

[<https://www.worktheworld.com/blog/why-culture-shock-is-good-for-you>]

"Studying abroad: culture shock" by INTO Study

[https://youtu.be/z5EEz_R_RiE]

EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In homestay, you may notice the differences in life styles listed below. For students, these will often be new and unexpected. For hosts, these are often things we take for granted in the U.S. so it is important to be ready for surprise, confusion, or resistance from students.

- Leftovers and how we prepare food
- Short showers vs. long showers
- Showers once per day
- Showers in the morning or at night before going to bed
- Living space in basements
- Taking shoes off at the door
- Direct vs. indirect communication
- Saying thank you a lot
- Smiles and giggles when they are unsure what to say in English
- Locking the front door
- Boundaries
- How to use the kitchen space
- How to use washer and dryer
- How to greet people (bowing, shaking hands, hugs, kisses)

Both students and hosts will need to make efforts to understand each other and avoid miscommunication. When uncomfortable situations happen, they are most likely coming from cultural differences.

Here are helpful tips:

- Research the country and customs of your student before they arrive.
- Talk with your student about their life back home. What does their family look like? Do they live with other siblings? Parents? Grandparents? Do both parents work or just one? Who helps out at home? What does a normal week look like for them?
- Share what we do here in the U.S. regarding an issue that comes up. Ask what they do in their country about this issue.
- After a student is settled, sit down and talk about the expectations of homestay, theirs and yours.
- Have a regular check-in time to ask about how things are going.
- Be prepared to take the initiative when it comes to having these kinds of conversations.



SCHEDULES

Thoughtful and clear communication regarding schedules is very important. Hosts should not decide or restrict when and where students may go, but it is reasonable for hosts to set quiet hours or (in some cases) actual curfews. Students are not expected to seek host permission, but should still inform hosts of their class schedule and outside plans in order to avoid worry and conflict. Hosts are not responsible for what students are doing outside of their home and where they stay but often form bonds of caretaking with students. Because every situation is different, it will take practice to learn how to balance these concerns.

VISITORS & OVERNIGHT GUESTS

Some hosts have additional space and may be able to accommodate overnight visitors. Students should be allowed to have guests, but must obtain permission from the host before inviting others to stay with them. If a host decides that someone may not be allowed in their home, it is important to clearly explain the reason and students must respect the hosts' wishes.

In addition to friends, students sometimes want to have significant others and romantic partners over to visit. They may ask if they can stay the night. Hosts are discouraged from allowing this with underage students but may feel comfortable allowing this with adult students. Hosts should clearly communicate with students the house rules for overnight guests.

Hosts do not need to notify the Homestay Office every time a friend or family member visits or occasionally stays the night. At the same time, hosts do need to advise the homestay office anytime they have guests who will spend extended time in the home (generally a few weeks or more). Any extended guests over the age of 18 will be required to undergo a background check the same as any permanent resident of the home over 18.

WORKING AND VOLUNTEERING

In order for students to stay in compliance with F1 Visa requirements, international students may work part-time on-campus (19 hours per week or less) but are not allowed to work for pay off-campus. This covers any type of work for compensation which would include something as simple seeming as offering a discount to students who perform extra chores.

Students must complete one quarter of study at TCC in order to be eligible for an on-campus job. Job postings can be found at [Administrative and Staff Openings | Sorted by Job Title ascending | TCC Career Pages \(schooljobs.com\)](#)

Students are allowed, and encouraged, to volunteer anywhere in the community. Students interested in volunteer opportunities can connect with staff in International Programs or the Office of Student Engagement at TCC. Students do not need to go through the college, however. Other resources can be a host families' church, a local community center, city websites for Tacoma, University Place, and/or Fircrest, as well as the internet.

ACTIVITIES



Students become independent very quickly. After hosts introduce them to the bus system and the neighborhood, they soon learn their way around Tacoma. Most students will spend the majority of their time outside the household with school activities, studying, or hanging out with friends.

There are many opportunities for engagement on campus. Immediate friendships are usually formed with other international students when students are placed in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes. There are many clubs that students can participate in (such as The International Student Organization) as well as the Office of Student Engagement which organizes on and off campus activities during fall, winter and spring quarters.

HOLIDAYS & OUTINGS

There are many occasions when families and friends travel or celebrate together. They might go on weekend trips to the city, beach, or mountains. Students are often invited to accompany hosts on these outings. Hosts should communicate clearly what the costs are and who



will be paying. If students will not be accompanying the host, hosts should let Housing Staff know in advance so that we can help hosts make arrangements for their students.

If international students travel outside the US, they must have a DSO officer (any staff in the International Programs Office) sign their I-20 before they leave. Students can bring their I-20 to the front desk at the International Programs Office and pick-up the signed copy three working days later. They can also request an appointment with their advisor. Some students will need a special visa to travel to Canada, Mexico or another country other than the US or their own.

RELIGIONS

Some hosts may wish to invite students to attend religious services with them. This is a kind gesture meant to teach the student about hosts' values and beliefs, but students are not required to, and should not be pressured to attend.



Often, the religion of students will differ from that of their hosts.

Discussions about these differences can be a good way for hosts and students to begin to understand one another. While discussions about religion are a natural and important part of the homestay relationship, it is vital that hosts and students understand the difference between sharing ideas and proselytizing. Homestay is not a forum for religious conversion and any host or student who pressures others in the home to conform to a particular belief system will be dismissed from the program.

TRANSPORTATION

Students are responsible for their own transportation, so it is important that hosts teach them the transit system and neighborhood as quickly as possible. Each homestay is located either within walking distance of the college or on a bus line. Some hosts lend students bicycles at their own risk. If hosts choose to do this, they must inform students that they are required to wear a helmet when riding a bike in Tacoma. Students must have a sturdy lock and a helmet. Students can be held accountable if the bicycle is damaged or stolen.

TCC students are eligible for an ORCA card from the Office of Student Engagement at the beginning of each quarter. Orca cards are distributed upon arrival or the first day of orientation. This card is only for Pierce Transit, but students can load funds if they want to also access the King County/Seattle Metro system.

Students can use the Pierce Transit site to plan trips and it's also a great tool for hosts to stay up to date and better teach students. Pierce Transit also has a digital app that can be used for fare payment instead of carrying cash. [Home > Pierce Transit](#)

Some students choose to buy a car. By law they must possess a valid driver's license and purchase insurance for their vehicle. Students are often unclear on these issues and are encouraged to research first. Students from some few countries can use their license from home to get a WA state license, while other must go through the entire testing process. The host or staff at the International Programs Office can help, but hosts are not expected to teach their student how to drive.

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR (Title IX)

Tacoma Community College's policy about Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault can be found here: [Sexual Harassment Protection and Title IX : Tacoma Community College \(tacomacc.edu\)](https://www.tacomacc.edu/sexual-harassment-protection-and-title-ix).

During orientation, every student will receive information about Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault, and the importance of this topic.

As a host, you are responsible for the safety of your students in the home and preparing them (as much as possible) for navigating outside the home. Students are protected from cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault including: unwanted flirting, unwanted sexual attention, unwanted touching, or exposure to potentially offensive content. These protections extend to students of any gender or sexual orientation.

Your student should have the expectation of comfort in your home. We encourage conversations directly addressing what their comfort levels are, especially since these are influenced by culture and vary greatly. For example, what some people may see as a compliment, others may receive as an unwanted approach. Please keep in mind that both your family and any guests are held to these standards. **We expect students to have the same care and respect of their host family.**

Unfortunately, some of the most common conflicts in this area are from guests or other members of the household. For example, imagine a host family with young boys of their own but who normally hosts female students. More than one such family has had problems when those boys become curious tweens and teens. These situations may not be malicious or intentional in nature, but they can still have a very negative impact and serious consequence.

Some students come from countries where females have less protection or status; whether formal or informal. This is also true (often more so) for LGBTQ students of any gender. They may not know that certain behaviors that are accepted (even encouraged) in their home country are not socially acceptable, and may be illegal, in the U.S. This includes dating violence, stalking, etc. Students may be targeted by locals aware of this, or become victims of other students from their home countries. Sometimes it is the perpetrator and not the victim in homestay.

FOR HOSTS	FOR STUDENTS
<p>We encourage you to be prepared to talk about these topics with your students. This can be hard and we certainly do not expect hosts to be alone in this. Hosts are often the first to learn about situations of concern so please contact Homestay staff immediately if you see or hear anything. We want to ensure proper support and resources for the student, as well as the host. There are also legal requirements involved with reporting incidents that happen to students in an official TCC program whether that incident takes place on or off campus</p>	<p>As a student at Tacoma Community College, you have the right to be protected from sexual harassment and sexual assault. If you experience anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, either in your home, with friends, at school, or in the community, please come in and discuss your experience with Homestay staff, or another staff member at Tacoma Community College with whom you feel comfortable. TCC Staff are here to make sure that you have the best experience possible and can help in these difficult situations.</p>

It is important to know that nearly all staff at TCC are considered “Mandated Reporters.” This means that we are required to report situations involving assault, violence, or harassment (sexual or otherwise). We can help ensure only the correct people are given information and help protect privacy, but we must report situations of concern even if the student asks us not to report.

SMOKING AND ALCOHOL

Smoking is not allowed inside host homes. Students who wish to smoke should ask which areas outside the house, if any, are to be used for smoking. Students who are legally old enough must also respect host rules regarding alcohol in their home.

- 21 is the legal age for alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana
- Vaping is considered the same as smoking for these purposes



MARIJUANA AND OTHER DRUGS

Marijuana is legal in the state of WA, but it is still considered illegal by the federal U.S. government and is forbidden on campus. This extends to homestay. Even if a student is of-age, they are not to possess or consume marijuana in or near the home.

Students are not allowed to use any other recreational or illegal drugs or have drug paraphernalia in host homes. If hosts find any of these items on their property or find evidence of any use, the TCC Housing Staff has the right to immediately terminate the student’s homestay. The student will no longer be allowed to participate in the homestay program at Tacoma Community College and will be ineligible for a refund of any homestay fees already paid to the host.

CHANGES IN HOMESTAY

Hosts are expected to keep the Housing Staff informed about changes in their homestay situation. They are to notify the Housing Staff if the host or student is planning to go on vacation. Please also keep us up to date on any changes in room availability, additions of any pets (especially if there were no pets when you first applied), etc.

We are required to conduct a background check on all adults living in the home so it is critical that we are informed of anyone over 18 who moves in to the home. This also includes any children in the home who still live in the home after turning 18 or other adults who reside for extended periods..

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

As in any family, accidents can happen. Students are responsible for any damage they cause by accident, but hosts should check that their homeowners insurance covers additional non-family members living in their home.

FIRE SAFETY

Hosts should have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, at least one (1) carbon monoxide (CO2) detector in the house, and working smoke detectors including one in or near the student's room.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

International students at Tacoma Community College are required to have medical insurance to attend. Tacoma Community College offers a comprehensive insurance plan, which will cover the students in case of an illness or accident. Tacoma Community College works with Firebird Insurance and international students are specifically required to purchase this insurance. Existing coverage from home or any other insurance purchased separately will not meet this requirement.



Firebird insurance covers primarily health; including mental health. Dental and vision coverage is limited to repairs, surgery, or treatment due to injury or sickness. **Routine dental and vision coverage is not included in this plan.**

The cost of the insurance is automatically charged to the student's account each quarter in the same way as tuition. New TCC students are automatically covered up to 30 days prior to the start of classes. Students transferring from a different U.S. school may have different effective dates based on the coverage at their original school. A full explanation of the TCC/Firebird plan is available at www.fiig-insurance.com.

Parents of students under the age of 18 will sign an Underage Form consent form which is on file with the International Programs Office. Some providers may require a copy of this form in order to see the student for treatment and/or to provide information to the host. Please contact the International Programs Office if you need a copy. Exceptions will be made for some students in very limited situations. For more information or to seek an exemption, contact our staff.

Students will receive their insurance card during the new student orientation in the first week. They will need to take their insurance card, photo ID and money for the co-payment to the clinic or hospital whenever they are seen.

EMERGENCIES & LIST OF CLINICS & HOSPITALS

In case of an emergency and outside of work hours, please call first call (or text) the **Homestay Emergency phone: (253) 355-5781**. You can also call the **Campus Security Office at #253-566-5111**. They can get a hold of a staff member of International Student Services and Programs. Please only do so in case of an emergency that cannot wait until the next workday or until after the weekend. The following clinics and hospitals will accept TCC insurance and may accept plans from other countries.

MultiCare Indigo Urgent Care

Located in: Stadium District
Address: 632 Division Avenue, Tacoma
Phone: (253) 403-3955

MultiCare University Place Urgent Care

Located in: University Place
Address: 2700 Bridgeport Way W Ste A,
 University Place
Phone: (253) 301-6760

MultiCare Indigo Urgent Care

Located in: Gig Harbor
Address: 4784 Borgen Blvd Ste G, Gig
 Harbor
Phone: (253) 530-8450

Franciscan Prompt Care at St. Joseph

Address: 1812 South J Street, Ste 120,
 Tacoma
Phone: (253) 428-220

MultiCare Allenmore Hospital*

Address: 1901 S Union Ave,
 Tacoma, WA 98405
Hours: Open 24 hours

MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital*

Address: 315 M.L.K. Jr Way,
 Tacoma, WA 98405
Hours: Open 24 hours

St. Joseph Medical Center*

Address: 1717 South J Street,
 Tacoma, WA 98405
Hours: Open 24 hours

** Hospitals and ER are for only serious injury
 or illness*



TCC Homestay Program

THANK YOU

Tacoma Community College appreciates the participation of students and hosts in the Homestay program. This exchange is the basis for true global education. Thank you for promoting academic excellence and cultural understanding

