



Homestay Student Handbook

Living with an American host family is often one of the most rewarding experiences for international students at LCSC. Some host families correspond regularly with students who lived in their homes as long as 15 years ago. Others have visited their former students in their home countries. Students come from all over the United States and from even further to visit their American "moms and dads." What better way to learn about America than to become a part of an American family?

You may be surprised at the different kinds of families here. It's hard to describe a "typical" American family, because there are so many kinds:

- "Traditional" families – a mother, father, and children
- Single-parent families – one parent with children
- Elderly couples whose children have moved out
- Young couples (married or unmarried) with or without children
- Hosts originally from another country, but who now call the USA their home
- And more!

It is uncommon for Americans to invite strangers to live in their home as a member of their family. These host families have made a special effort to find a place for you in their homes and in their lives. They have done so because they have a desire to learn about other peoples, cultures, and places; and to share their culture with others.

Your stay here will be one of the great adventures of your life. Take time to observe and ask questions. Don't be too quick to judge what you see or experience. "Different" isn't always a bad thing.

HOMESTAY PAYMENT

Application Fee

In order to be placed with a host family, you must complete an application form and pay the homestay application fee of \$100. This fee pays for the homestay coordinator to find you a host family, and it also helps pay for the International Programs Office to do regular follow-up on host families (such as background checks and home visits). It is **NON-REFUNDABLE**. You may pay the fee online at <http://www.lcsc.edu/international/payment-options/>.

Monthly Rent

Each month you will pay your host family \$570. This money helps your host family pay for the extra food, water, electricity and other expenses of having another person in the house.

The homestay rent should always be paid one month in advance. When you move in with your host family, you should pay it as soon as you arrive in the home. Host families do not like to ask for money. You should pay your homestay rent by the first day of the month without being asked. If you are late paying your rent, your host family has the right to charge a late fee of 5% of the rent, for each day the rent is past due. You will also have to meet with the Homestay Coordinator. If the rent is more than 10 days late, you will be removed from the Homestay Program, and you will not be able to register for classes until you have paid the rent in full.

The homestay fee pays for:

- A place for you to live.
- Airport pickup on arrival.
- Food for three meals a day.
- Transportation to/from LCSC, if your hosts live more than 1.6 km from campus.
- Laundry facilities and supplies.
- A chance to live and learn with some very special people.

The Homestay fee does not pay for:

- Long distance telephone calls.
- Personal grooming supplies such as shampoo, razors, toothpaste, hairbrushes and cosmetics.
- Someone to cook and clean for you. You will join the family for most evening meals, but you will probably make your own breakfasts and lunches. You should clean your own room, clean up after yourself in every room, and offer to help with other cleaning tasks.
- Meals and snacks purchased away from home. If you want to carry a lunch to school, your host family will provide food for you to make one. If you don't want to carry a lunch, you can buy food on campus with your own money.
- Entertainment expenses. If you go with your host family to a movie or concert, you should expect to pay for yourself.
- A taxi service. Hosts will take you to/from the airport and to/from LCSC (if they live far from campus), but all other transportation is your responsibility.

Partial Month

If you move into your host home after the beginning of the month or leave the host home before the end of the month, you will pay for only the days you live with your host family. Your fee will be charged on the daily rate of \$19 per day. **This rule does not apply for vacation periods, holidays, weekends, etc. when students choose to be away from their host families.**

Changing Host Families

Unless there is a serious problem or dangerous condition, you should stay with the host family you were originally assigned to. In all cases, you should do your best to talk to your host family and try to work out the problem. If after doing so you are still unable to resolve the issue, contact the Homestay Coordinator.

If you are determined to move to a new host home, you will have to fill out a Host Family Change Request form and pay a \$100 change fee that is *NON-REFUNDABLE*. The fee will

not be charged if you have to move due to a serious problem or a dangerous condition as determined by International Programs Office – if, for example, your health were endangered or the living quarters were uninhabitable. One such instance might be if you found you were allergic to the family pet.

Moving Out/School Holidays

Tell your host family the exact date you plan to move out **30 days in advance**. This act is called "giving notice." If you give notice before leaving, your host family will refund any rent owed to you. If you move suddenly without giving notice, you will not be refunded rent paid and may have to pay up to 30 days of the homestay payment even though you did not live in the home.

You should tell your family at least two weeks in advance if you plan to be away from home for more than a week so they will not plan activities or buy food for you.

If you go on vacation for more than 2 weeks from IIE then you must tell your host family 2 weeks before you leave. You will have to pay them half of the daily rate (\$9.50 per day). If you chose to leave without making arrangements then you may not be guaranteed the same host family and you will have to pay an additional \$100 fee in order for the Homestay Coordinator to place you in another home.

You do not have to give 30 days' notice if the situation in the home changes in such a way that it becomes a serious problem or a dangerous condition as determined by International Programs Office.

The host family must also give a 30 days' notice before asking you to move out unless you are destroying property or doing something illegal.

Damages

You will reimburse the host family for any costs associated with the repair or replacement of the host's home or property damaged by you. LCSC will not be responsible for negligence on the part of the host family or the student to home or person, for any loss, damage, injury or death which may result from the student's stay.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the most important thing you can do. Don't be shy or embarrassed if your spoken English isn't very good. The more you talk with your host family, the better your English will get, and the more you will be able to understand each other. Use dictionaries, gestures, and even written notes when necessary.

Names

Discuss what names to go by – what you should call them and what they should call you. Most Americans are very informal with names and will probably want you to call them by their first name (for example, "Jane" for "Jane Smith"); however, please ask them first.

HOMESTAY RULES

House rules

Many host families will write out a list of family and house rules for your convenience. If your host family has not posted these rules for you, you may want to ask them if there are any rules you should know about. If you don't understand, or even forget, please do not feel shy about asking! Host families would prefer you to ask than to say nothing at all.

Children

If your host family has children, you should never discipline them. Americans are very sensitive about their parenting skills and usually are not happy if someone (including a parent!) gives them advice that they did not ask for. Let the host parents know if there is any situation that needs their attention. Communicate clearly with the family how much time you want to spend with the children and when you need to focus on schoolwork. Your hosts should respect your need for privacy and should make sure that their children do as well.

You should not be asked to baby-sit. International students on an F-1 visa are not permitted to work off-campus, so if your hosts offer you money to baby-sit their children, politely refuse.

Alcohol consumption

Regardless what you may have seen or heard about young people drinking alcohol in America, the legal drinking age is 21. **If you are under 21, you cannot drink alcohol in America.** If you are under age 21 and you drink any alcohol or in possession of any alcohol, you could be arrested, jailed, and even deported. If you are over 21, you should check with your host family concerning alcohol in their home or even coming home drunk. You should never drink in their home nor allow any of your friends to drink in their home without their permission.

Smoking

You cannot smoke inside your host family's home unless they have given you specific permission to do so. Most host families do not allow smoking indoors and it is illegal in most public buildings such as restaurants and theaters. If you do smoke, be sure to dispose of your cigarette butts in an ash tray or other specified place.

Curfews

If you are under 18 years of age, your host family should establish a curfew (how late you can be out at night) for safety reasons. Students over the age of 18 need to be respectful of the family's hours and plans. Communication is key! You are an adult and can choose when you come and go, but at the same time, you should let your host family know when you will be missing meals, coming home late, or making any other changes to the normal routine. Furthermore, if you come home extremely late, do not expect your family to prepare a meal for you!

Most hosts will lock their doors after a certain time of night. If you are going to be home late, make sure that you tell your hosts (so that they don't worry) and ask for a key so that you can get in.

Overnight guests

You are not allowed to have overnight guests in your room. Ask your host family if they have any restrictions concerning other visitors – how late visitors are allowed and so forth. Respect their rules!

HOST FAMILY FACILITIES & PROVISIONS

Bedroom

You will have a private room with a door that locks from the inside. It will have adequate heat, light, and ventilation. Your room will have a bed and a place to store your clothing and other items. It should also have a desk and chair or your family will provide a quiet place for studying in some other part of the house. If your room is lacking any of these amenities, ask your host family about them. If the problem persists, contact the Homestay Coordinator.

Bathroom

You may have to share a bathroom with one or more other family members. If so, you should find out the family schedule for taking showers and baths and follow it. Don't take extremely long showers, even if you aren't sharing a bathroom – it's wasteful and expensive.

There should be a place in the bathroom--a shelf or drawer--where you can put your personal grooming items.

Some families ask that you not take baths or showers after they have gone to bed since the noise would wake them. Ask what the rules are at your house and abide by them.

Be sure to leave the bathroom clean after you use it. Wash out the tub and sink, and hang up your towel and washcloth.

Kitchen

You will have access to the kitchen to prepare meals and snacks. You will be expected to prepare some of your own food, particularly breakfast and lunch. If you have never done this, tell your host family and they will be glad to help you learn. **If you do not know how to use the dishwasher, microwave, or any other kitchen appliance, ask for help.**

Offer to help prepare the food and clean up after family meals.

When you prepare food for yourself or have guests over, you should clean up after you finish. Always ask your family before you invite friends to eat or have a party at the house. The food your family provides for you is not intended for your friends. You should buy the refreshments for your guests.

Meals

Your host family will want to know what you like and do not like to eat. Tell them if there is some food you cannot eat. You are not expected to enjoy all foods, but you should try what is offered before you decide. Some foods taste better than they look.

Tell your host family if there is a special food you miss. Often, the family will be able to get it for you.

Offer to cook a meal from your country or help cook such a meal.

You need to eat a balanced diet to stay healthy. If you are not getting enough to eat or you feel that the food is not healthy, you should talk to your host family. If you still have a problem after talking to your host family, talk to the Homestay Coordinator.

Be sure to tell your family if you will not be present for a meal or if you will be late. They need to know whether to save food for you.

You should buy your own candy, potato chips, soft drinks, and so forth. Do not expect your host family to provide these things.

Laundry

Most families ask that you wash, dry, and fold your own clothes, sheets, and towels. Your host family will tell you what they prefer.

The family will provide laundry facilities and supplies and will teach you how to operate the washer and dryer. If they do not, ask them.

Housework

Although Americans are often thought to be very rich, most Americans do not have maids, cooks, or other domestic servants. Americans expect everyone in the family to help with the housework.

You need to keep your own room clean and clean up any messes you make in other parts of the house. You should also do any other small jobs that are asked of you. It is also gracious to volunteer sometimes for a larger job.

However, your main job is studying English. If you feel that you are being asked to do more housework than is reasonable, talk to your host family or to the Homestay Coordinator.

Telephone

Limit the length and frequency of any telephone calls you make from the family's landline.

It is your responsibility to pay for any long distance telephone calls you make. You should either purchase a telephone calling card or buy your own pay-as-you-go cell phone.

TRANSPORTATION

Your host family will meet you at the airport or bus depot when you arrive. They will also take you to the airport or bus depot when you leave.

During your stay, if you do not have an automobile, you will sometimes need rides. You and your family should cooperate in this matter. Try to let them know in advance if you need a ride and try to fit your needs into the family schedule. For group events, try to get a ride with someone who is attending the event. While they will try to accommodate your need for transportation, they should not be expected to take you wherever you want, whenever you want – they are not a taxi service.

If your family lives more than 1.6km from school, they will provide transportation to and from school. They will probably take you to school when they go to work and pick you up after work. This may mean that you will arrive on campus before classes start and/or have to wait on campus after classes are over. While you wait, you can study in the library or visit with friends. Your family will appreciate it if you are at the meeting place on time. If you change plans – get a ride with someone else, or go to another student's house – be sure to let your host parents know.

If you drive, your car is your responsibility. It is a state law in both Idaho and Washington that drivers have a valid driver's license and liability insurance and that everyone in the car wears a seatbelt. If you have a driver's license from your home country, you can only use it for up to one year, and then you must get a license from the state in which you live. Never drive after drinking alcohol.

If your host family offers you the use of their car, you must choose whether to drive it or not. Before you drive your host family's car, work out a written agreement with them listing any expenses you agree to pay (such as gas, repairs, insurance, automobile registration).

If you ride a bicycle, your bicycle is your responsibility. Learn the traffic rules pertaining to bicycles and follow them. Many bicyclists in this country wear a safety helmet. Wearing a helmet may save you from brain damage or even death in case of an accident. Because there are not nearly as many bicyclists in American communities as many other countries, American motorists don't expect bikes to be on the road, and often don't see them.

If your host family offers you a bicycle to ride, you must decide whether or not to accept. Before riding your host family's bicycle, work out a written agreement about repairs and who is responsible should the bicycle get stolen.

Breaking Homestay Rules

The International Programs Office takes the homestay rules very seriously. If you choose to break homestay rules, then you are at risk of losing the privilege of staying with a host family.

- If you smoke in a host parents' house, you will pay for the carpets to be cleaned.
- If you cause damage to the host's home or furniture, you will also pay for the furniture.
- If you break the rules of your host family such as **smoking** in their homes or not following other rules set by IPO and your host family then you will need to meet with the Homestay Coordinator and you will be removed from the Homestay Program.
- You may also have to pay for a hotel if you are asked to leave by your host family.

- The International Programs takes no responsibility for your housing if you purposefully neglect to follow the rules of the program.

Student Code of Conduct

You are obligated to follow the rules outlined in the LCSC Student Code of Conduct while living in your host family’s home. You can find a copy of the student code of conduct on the LCSC website. You will also learn about the Student Code of Conduct in the American Culture class.

Any violations of the Student Code of Conduct while living with a host family are punishable by the Lewis-Clark State College’s Vice President of Student Affairs.

Student signature _____

Host signature _____

Date _____