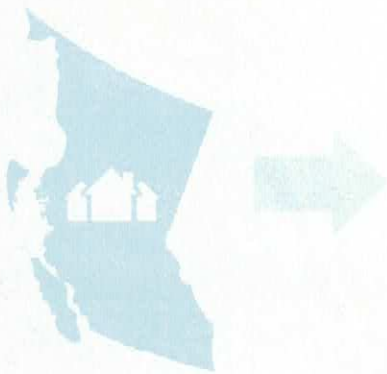


## About Homestay in British Columbia

The Province of British Columbia and B.C. school district and independent school international student programs are proud of B.C.'s world class education system, our welcoming communities and our incredible natural environment. Recognizing that homestay plays a pivotal role in an international student's experience, B.C. is committed to high-quality homestay experiences for all students.

A homestay is a formal arrangement by an international student program, or its delegates, to house an international student with an approved family during the course of study. This family and its residence are both commonly referred to as the 'homestay'. B.C.'s Guidelines refer to this family as the 'host family'. A K-12 homestay student is a minor child (i.e. under 19) from outside B.C. who pays a fee to stay with a homestay family in return for meals, a private room, family support, and various cultural experiences.



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*A homestay program provider is an organization or company that arranges homestays. Sometimes the homestay program will be provided by the school or school district. Sometimes the provider will be a third-party company or organization.*

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In BC, school districts and independent schools offer homestay using three different administrative models:

1. Some school districts and independent schools run their own homestay programs
2. Some schools and districts contract the administration of their homestay programs out to other homestay providers
3. Some school districts or independent schools keep lists of homestay program providers for international parents and students

There are also homestay service providers, such as private companies or websites, which might not have a relationship with a K-12 school district or independent school. Some parents and/or international students may be considering working with such a homestay program provider or, alternatively, placing the student with a relative or family friend. Parents and international students considering these options may want to consult with the school district or independent school international student program before finalizing their decision. The international student program may have policies or information directly relating to these situations.

# Guidelines

## SECTION 1: Homestay Program Provider Responsibilities

To promote the best possible homestay experience for international K-12 students, homestay program providers should:

1. Maintain a homestay screening process for host families and for international students to determine suitability. The host family screening process should be published and should include:
  - A. Scheduled home inspections and host parent interviews
  - B. Scheduled criminal records check for all adult household members
  - C. Reference checks for the host family parent(s) where required
2. Gather appropriate and up-to-date personal records/contact information for the student, parent/guardian, custodian and/or host family, including:
  - A. Legal first and last names (i.e. as they appear in a passport)
  - B. Gender
  - C. Age
  - D. Relevant medical information
  - E. Country of residence
  - F. Address
  - G. Contact phone number and email address
3. Ensure that all data collected and any information distributed by the homestay program provider complies with protection of privacy legislation.
4. Develop and deliver a comprehensive training program for new host families to ensure familiarity and understanding with best practices and develop a process for regular host families to stay current with best practice.
5. Place no more than two international students with a host family at the same time.
6. Avoid concurrently placing both adult and minor international students in the same home unless there is a clear rationale for how this benefits the students.
7. Inform the host family of potential student placements by using a standardized student profile form that includes the dates of accommodation, special requirements, and relevant medical and behavioral background.
8. Liaise with the student, school, host family and parents/guardian and provide each with support.
9. Communicate with international students and host families on a regular basis.
10. Provide 24-hour emergency contact for international students and homestay families.
11. Implement and maintain quality assurance and program evaluation mechanisms.
12. Offer conflict resolution services (and the opportunity to reach consensus) to both the host family and the international student.
13. Maintain clear, published standards and procedures relating to homestay, including procedures for the dismissal of host families in warranted cases and procedures for transferring students to a different host family.
14. Develop separate reference manuals for host families and for international students (and their parents) that describe relevant legislation, standards and procedures. Manuals should contain standards and procedures applicable to the full range of a host family's and an international student's homestay experience.

## SECTION 3: Host Family Responsibilities

To promote the best possible homestay experience for international K-12 students, host family parent(s) should:

1. Provide a caring, nurturing and supportive environment for international students.
2. Abide by all rules/guidelines established by the homestay program provider when hosting a student placed by that provider
3. Be 25 years of age or older, or receive approval from the international student program as an approved exception.
4. Agree to scheduled in-home inspections by either the international student program or the homestay program provider or both and criminal record checks (for anyone living in the home who is 18 years or older).
5. Have no more than two international students in the homestay at the same time.
6. Avoid concurrently hosting both adult and minor international students.
7. Provide food for three nutritious meals per day.
8. Provide a clean and tidy home with a private, adequately furnished bedroom, with access to:
  - A. An area with a desk, chair and adequate lighting for homework
  - B. A bathroom, linens and use of laundry facilities
  - C. entry into the home like any other member of the family (e.g. house key and alarm code, if applicable)
  - D. Where possible, access to the Internet to support educational goals and consistent communication with home
9. Ensure the house is safe and complies with the BC Building Code and/or the local building bylaw, as applicable, and with the local fire code.
10. Ensure a student's general well-being, seek medical attention when necessary, and report any significant medical or mental health issues to the school, the custodian, the homestay program provider and the international student program.
11. Inform the school or international student program if the student drinks alcohol, takes or possesses non-prescribed, illegal drugs or breaks the law.
12. Ensure the home and auto insurance policy adequately covers students residing within their home; some policies do not cover homestay students.
13. Promote strong connections between an international student and their parents, schools and communities by:
  - A. Using the student's desired language of study (English or French) in the home
  - B. Imposing reasonable limits on the student's personal use of the internet (i.e. number of hours/day and appropriate times of day)
  - C. Negotiating and enforcing an appropriate and reasonable curfew and house rules for the student
  - D. Assisting the student in seeking extra-curricular activities and sports
  - E. Attending school or district orientation for host families and other cultural or education events

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The host family, also known as the homestay family, is the B.C. family that welcomes an international student into its home to live while the student studies at a B.C. K-12 school.

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