PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE TO THE GLORY OF GOD

Pacific Christian School
International Student Program

Homestay Program Guide

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Pacific Christian School

Vision: Educational Excellence to the Glory of God

Mission: Nurturing students in critical thinking, Christ-like living and joyful service to be faithful citizens in God's world.

Goal of the Homestay Program

The goal of the Pacific Christian School Homestay Program is to provide a safe, supportive, English-speaking, Christian, family environment for international students attending the school. Our goal is to select host families who meet these criteria. Parents of international students, together with host parents, are encouraged to provide consistency between the home and school so that the vision of the school is supported and advanced.

An excellent homestay environment allows students to improve their English skills within a positive, family environment. It also gives students an opportunity to experience Canadian culture and traditions. It is our prayer that students will have a rich experience and that they will see Christ both in the family and at school.

We believe that these guidelines, based on those provided by the Ministry of Education (BC Homestay Guidelines), encourage excellent communication and understanding between homestay parents and their students. We also realize that difficulties and differences will be a part of this process and we are committed to supporting host families and international students with issues that may arise. We look forward to working with you as you welcome students into your home.

International Program Coordinator: Sarah Edgar

Homestay Coordinator: Ana Nelson

Becoming a Host Family at Pacific Christian School

Becoming a host family in the Pacific Christian School International Program requires the following:

- Living in a way that reflects a belief in the Triune God.
- Completing the on-line Homestay Application Form
- Receiving an initial home inspection by the Homestay Coordinator
- Ensuring the house is safe and compliant with the BC Building Code and/or the local building bylaws as applicable, and with the local fire code
- Based on **BC Homestay Guidelines**, homestays may have up to two international students in the home at the same time. It is recommended to have a mix of language groups in the home.
- Ensuring that home and auto insurance policies adequately cover the student(s) residing within the home
- Submitting current **criminal record checks** for all adults 18 years or older living in the home.
- Mandatory attendance at the annual start-up Homestay Meeting
- Mandatory **bi-annual** home visits by the Homestay Coordinator
- Host parents should be 25 years of age or older
- Follow all guidelines outlined in the BC Homestay Guide

Homestay families should be cautioned against depending on income from Homestay fees in order to balance their family budget. The school is not obliged to place or re-place a student or reimburse fees for perceived lost income.

Which student will be placed in which home?

As part of the registration process, International students are asked to complete a Homestay Information Form and write a short letter of introduction to their prospective host family. As much as possible, their requests are taken into consideration when the Homestay Coordinator determines placement. However, even if requested, it will not always be possible to match a student with a host family having children in the same age range as the student. In every case, the Homestay Coordinator will make every effort to provide the best situation for the student.

Ordinarily, we do not place more than one student per homestay. Where there is an exception, students must be of the same sex and have a different first language. A host family is not permitted to have more than two international students (BC guidelines). If a host family is planning placement through another agency, consent must be given, in advance, by the Homestay Coordinator.

Family Life: What to expect

Our host families want to host students because they are interested in other cultures and want students to be a part of their family; the experience should not be just room and board. Host parents are looking out for the students' best interests and will help them stay safe and healthy, encourage them in their school work, and guide them as they grow as children of God.

As a general guideline, host families are asked to treat their students as they would one of their children. Using this guideline helps families determine not only what they would expect of the student, but also what the student should expect of them.

Students must have their own room, which should include an adequate study area. The room should be supplied with the following: bed, dresser, closet, mattress, pillow, bed linens, lamp, chair, desk, and internet access. Host families should respect the privacy of the student's room and everyone in the household should respect each other's property; however, in special circumstances, host families may access the student's room without consent.

Students should be able to have access entry into the home like any other member of the family (e.g. house key and/or alarm code).

Students should have access to a bathroom and laundry facilities.

Students and host parents will need to talk about how much time they will want to spend alone. It's important to find a good balance between respecting each other's privacy and spending too much time alone. It would be impolite and unwise for students to spend too much of their time behind closed doors writing/talking in their own language at the cost of taking part in family life, getting to know others and improving their English skills.

English should be spoken whenever the student is present.

Daily Life: What to Expect

Inside the home…

Celebrations

Living in a Canadian homestay allows students to gain an understanding of Canadian celebrations and traditions. Students are encouraged to share in their host family and extended family's celebrations. There should be no expectations around gift-giving but a conversation with your student might be necessary and helpful.

Bathroom Use

Canadian bathroom routines can be very different. Some of the main differences are that Canadians typically:

- prefer taking showers to baths
- often shower in the morning
- bathe inside the bathtub;
  drain and clean the tub after use
- have no drain in the bathroom floor
- keep the bathroom floor dry
- shower once per day

Some important bathroom related things to keep in mind:

- There should be clear expectations concerning who can shower/bathe when and for how long.
- Leaving enough hot water for other people in the family is important.
- Showers should not be taken late in the evening if it disturbs the host family.
- Toilet paper, soap and towels will be provided by the host family. Students need to supply their own personal items such as toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner and moisturizing cream. The student's personal items should not be used by other members of the host family without permission.
- A host parent should talk to the student about what can and can't be flushed down the toilet.
- Although it might be embarrassing, a plugged toilet is something to report, not something to hide. Students should never be attempting to fix problems in the bathroom.
- The bathroom should be clean and dry after every use.

Telephone/Internet

We live in a digital age. At Pacific Christian School, we try to teach students how to be responsible with their digital devices. International students are required to follow the guidelines their host family has in place regarding use of the internet. It is recommended that a time in the evening is set when all digital devices are turned off. It is reasonable that students would be required to bring all devices down to a designated spot or actually turn them in to their host parents at an arranged time.

Chores

As members of the family, it is reasonable to ask students to clean and vacuum their room as well as clean the bathroom after using it. In addition, it is reasonable to ask students to assist with small daily chores like:

- Setting or clearing the table
- Washing dishes or tidying the kitchen
- Taking out the garbage or recycling
- Picking up personal items and keeping them in the bedroom
- Doing their personal laundry
- Making their own breakfast and lunch

It is not reasonable to expect students to help with

- Babysitting
- Doing heavy cleaning or yard work
- Cooking meals (unless they offer to do so)

Curfew

Curfews are dependent on age and at the discretion of the host family. It's important that both the students and the host parents negotiate reasonable expectations in this area.

Normally, evenings are meant for studying, spending time with the host family or participating in school, church or community events.

Bedtime is exactly that – time for bed and time to sleep. Bedtime does not mean time to use devices for gaming or connecting with family and friends.

Damaged Property

Host parents should review their home insurance policy with respect to liability and coverage.

In the process of normal living, household accidents may occur that do damage to household property. If a homestay student is involved in a household accident that is deemed to be an accident, but results in property damage, then the following should be considered:

- What would you charge your own child –the entire amount, the insurance deductible, or some amount in-between or lower?
- If the damage is a result of negligent or destructive behavior, the student may be expected to pay the deductible up to $500.00.
- The host family will not be held responsible for loss of property or physical harm incurred except in the case where Canadian Law has been breached.
- The host family will not hold the employees and board of the school responsible for any inconvenience or property damage, or physical harm incurred and received by the student.

Food

The host family is expected to provide three meals a day, as well as snacks. Typical meals may include:

- Breakfast: Usually a light, quick meal: bread with jam, honey or peanut butter; muffins; cereal with milk; fruit; yogurt. Sometimes (often on weekends or holidays) host families may prepare larger breakfasts of eggs, bacon, pancakes or waffles.

- Lunch: Canadian students often prepare their own lunches. This may include a sandwich, bun or bagel with meat or cheese, fruit, yogurt, raw vegetables, and cookies. Students may also bring leftovers or noodle packages that can be microwaved—the secondary campus has a number of microwaves for students to use.

  A note regarding lunches: The PCS Concession sells hot lunches every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and pizza is sold in the downstairs lobby every Thursday. Concession menus are available every week on the Thumbnail and on posters around the school. Students need to talk about these lunch options with their host parents. If it is the usual practice for the host family to offer a lunch and the student chooses to have a hot lunch from the concession (or pizza) instead, the students are responsible for the hot lunch/pizza cost.

- Supper: Usually some combination of any of the following foods – soup, meat, cooked vegetables, salad, and rice, pasta or potatoes.

Further thoughts around food:

- It is recommended that host families take their students grocery shopping in order to learn their likes and dislikes.

Host families may invite their student to share their culture by preparing a meal or dish for their family.

- Students should not be permitted to eat meals in their bedroom. Be sure that it's clear where food may or may not be eaten.
- Students may want to buy their own snacks. Discuss where they should store their food.
- Students are encouraged to be honest about the amount of food they receive and host parents are wise to ask whether the student has had enough. In Canada, it is very acceptable to have second helpings.
- Students should be adventurous about trying foods they are unfamiliar with. Host families should not insist that students eat food that they dislike.
- Students are expected to be at home in the evenings to eat with their host families. If students are going to be away, a reasonable notice should be given to the host family. Be sure that everyone understands what reasonable is.
- Host families may begin meals by praying, talk while they are eating, and close the meal time by reading from the Bible or a devotional.

Resolving Conflicts

Living with others can present problems. Problems and conflicts happen in all families and can be solved when everyone commits to understanding each other's expectations and needs. Communication is key to sorting out misunderstandings whether caused by cultural differences, communication difficulties, or other conflicting personal traits.

In most cases, if you have a problem or a misunderstanding with one another, you should:

- Tell each other about how you feel
- Tell each other what you need
- Encourage each other to express feelings and needs
- Use questions and verification techniques to facilitate communication

Problems of a more sensitive nature should be communicated to the Homestay Coordinator.

Re-placing students is not the first response when problems arise between host families and international students. The Homestay Coordinator or the International Program Coordinator will always insist that host families and students engage in open and honest conversation. A facilitated meeting may be arranged so that issues can be discussed. It is only when the school deems conflicts to be unresolvable that students will be placed in a new home or removed from the school. Ordinarily, when the request to be re-placed comes from the student, there will be a $250 homestay re-placement fee

Outside the home…

Church Attendance

Students are expected to regularly attend church with their host family. It's also great to encourage them (but not require them) to become involved in youth group activities. There may be times when a student wants to attend an ethnic church. Although this is acceptable, it should not take the place of regular attendance at the host family's church.

Family Holiday/Travel

If a host family wants to include their student in a family holiday they should get permission from the student's parents. Clear expectations about who pays the student's travel expenses should be communicated to the student's parents. If a decision is made not to include the student in the activity, it is the responsibility of the host family to make alternate arrangements that are acceptable to everyone and to communicate those changes to the Homestay Coordinator. Host families are expected to remunerate substitute families at the rate of $30.00/night.

Please ensure that, if you plan to travel to the USA, you have an appropriate travel visa. Our medical insurance provider, Guard.Me, covers student while they travel abroad.

Restaurants

Host families may enjoy dining out from time to time. If this replaces a regular mealtime, the host family should include the student and pay for the meal. In a special circumstance, where a host family may be unable to invite the student to join a restaurant meal or pay for it, it is critical to clearly communicate with the student about the reason why. In these cases, there must be an option for the student to remain at home and have a prepared meal provided.

If the student chooses to go out to eat when a meal at home is available, the student is responsible to pay for his/her meal.

Outings

International students must inform their host families when making plans to go out on a free day or afternoon. The student must make sure the host family knows where he/she is at all times. If a student is staying overnight at a friend or family's place, the host family needs to have the name, address and phone number of the friend's parents. A host family may refuse permission for their student to participate in some activities. Reasons for their refusal could include: concern for safety, conflict with family plans, or the amount of homework a student has. The school also reserves the right to refuse any request.

If students choose to visit a nearby city on the weekend, they are required to obtain permission from their host families, their biological parents. Also, they must notify the International Program Coordinator **one week in advance** and meet the following requirements:

- Provide all contact information of where they will be going, how long they are planning to be away, who they will be travelling with, what they are planning on doing while they are away, and what mode of transportation they will be using to get to and from their destination. This information must be provided to the International Program Coordinator using the Out of Town Permission Form at least **one week** before their intended travel day. Students are not permitted to travel until the International Program Coordinator has approved the request.

- Stay with a relative or another responsible adult. Students are not permitted to stay in hotels or to stay in homes with students of the opposite gender.
- Carry a cell phone and emergency contact numbers in case of problems.

All school policies must be adhered to. Drinking, drug use, and any other illegal or immoral activity is absolutely prohibited and may result in suspension or expulsion. Incomplete school work or a poor discipline record at school could be reasons for denying a request for going on an outing.

Direct permission from the students' parents is required if students go on a non-school trip in which they:

- travel further than a two-hour drive
- stay away for more than three nights
- stay somewhere overnight unsupervised by an adult

In these cases, the school will:

- arrange for a phone call to the parents.
- require a letter from the parents authorizing their child to travel under these circumstances.

Academic Support

Academic standards at Pacific Christian School are high and, as a result, students will require help at home with assignments from time to time. International Program Coordinators and staff are in constant communication with students' teachers and will decide, based on student marks, attitude and ability, if additional tutoring outside of school time would be beneficial. Our peer tutoring program occurs Monday through Thursday between 3:15 – 4:30 p.m. in the secondary library. Additional adult tutoring may be arranged at an additional cost to the student. Staff will work with host families to find times and places that are convenient for all.

Community service, volunteer hours and daily physical activity are requirements for graduation and require parental support.

School Absences

If sick, students must have permission from their host parent to be absent from school. Host parents must notify the school (complete absentee form) when the student is ill.

Students should not miss school for vacations. When booking flights home for holidays, students should refer to the school calendar to avoid missing instructional days.

School Trips

With the exception of meal expenses, host families are not expected to cover the costs of school trips.

Waiver forms and/or permission slips should be scanned to and signed by the parents. There are occasions where these forms can be signed by the Homestay Coordinator or the Custodian.

In an overnight event results in the student requiring money for meals, the homestay family should give the student $15.00 per day to cover this.

Transportation

Host families will ensure that students have transportation to and from school. It is reasonable to expect students to walk to school if the home is a two kilometre or less walk from school.

If the student needs to take the city or school bus to school, the host family is responsible for arranging and paying for the bus pass.

Host parents should be available to drive students to school, church or community-related activities. It is important to make polite requests in a reasonable amount of time. It is unreasonable for students to expect their host families to drive them everywhere. Public transportation (city bus) or bicycles are acceptable options. Except in emergency situations, host families should not expect their students to take a taxi.

It is reasonable for students to expect their host family to drive them to/pick them up from the airport/ferry/bus terminal.

NOTE: Nowhere is the "What would you do for your own children?" guideline more relevant than in the area of transportation.

Driver's Licenses/Ownership of Vehicles

While in the Pacific Christian School homestay program, international students are only permitted to get their driver's license and drive a vehicle with the permission of the parents, the host parents and the International Program Coordinator. It is advisable that students take a formal drivers training course.

Medical Insurance

Although some may have alternate coverage, as a rule, Guard.Me covers international students at Pacific Christian School. The host family may secure medical treatment for the student in the event of illness without liability. Where there is a greater concern, the Homestay Program Coordinator and/or the Custodian should be contacted.

In a limited number of clinics in the Greater Victoria area, students can use their Guard.Me card in the same way one uses a CARE card. A current list of these clinics is posted in the Guard.Me website - www.guard.me. If a student goes to a clinic not on the list or to the hospital, they will be expected to pay up front for treatment. Bringing your passport/Study Permit or some other form of identification is helpful. Students should get a copy of the bill and make a claim on the Guard.Me website. This is a straight forward procedure but assumes access to a scanner. If you need assistance, please contact the Homestay Program Coordinator.

Miscellaneous

Students may not make significant purchases without the permission of the Host family, the Homestay Coordinator and/or the International Program Coordinator. The International Program Coordinator reserves the right to decline permission to make the requested purchase.

Host families are expected to cover costs incurred as a result of students being involved in a family activity (for example, going to a movie). The host family is not expected to pay similar costs when the student goes out with friends.

Host families must inform the Homestay Coordinator of all residents and pets in the household. Please notify the Homestay Coordinator of all changes to the household.

If students invite guests to their homestay, it should be done with the knowledge and permission of the host family.

Emotional Support

Students experiencing mental health difficulties are encouraged to seek help from the school's counsellors. In addition, our health provider, Guard.Me, makes available a 24-hour counselling service that students can access by calling 1-844-451-9700 or going to keepmesafe.org. In addition, please note the following resources:

A. B.C. Helpline for Children (Tel: 1-800-663-9122). May be called to report when a child or youth under 19 years of age is being abused or neglected. There is a legal duty to report your concern to a child welfare worker.
B. Kids Help Phone (Tel: 1-800668-6868) Counselling and mental health support
C. MoE BC International Education Resources on homesickness, mental health

Important note: Homestays may need extra guidance in discussing topics like homesickness, mental health and wellness, and cultural differences. The MoE provides some thorough handouts and pamphlets to support you in some great discussions. to families are required to report behaviours displayed or medications taken by their international student, especially those that may be deemed harmful for the student or place them at risk.

Homestay Fees

Monthly Fees

The homestay fee is $1,250 per month for September 1 until June 30. This fee should be paid directly from the student to the homestay in 10 monthly installments. The homestay fee enables host families to recover the costs of housing and feeding an additional person. **No prepaid lump sum payments are permitted.**

If a student leaves the homestay for an overnight field trip, the homestay should provide the student with $15/day to cover meal expenses.

Fees recognize the cost of:

- food
- daily transportation to school, including school events or early morning/after school classes
- utilities
- preparing a comfortable bedroom that meets requirements

If a student leaves the homestay during July and August, the student has a few options:

1. Clean and vacate the room and pay no fees. The homestay is permitted to use the room. The homestay family will find a place in their home or garage to store a reasonable amount of the student's belongings during this time away. Students are not expected to pay a fee for this.
2. Leave belongings in the room and not allow the host family to use the room without the student's consent. In this case, the nightly homestay rate is reduced to $15/night

NOTE: If a student leaves the room during the school year (Christmas break, for example), the host family is not permitted to use the room without the student's consent.

If a student lives with the homestay family for a portion of the summer, they will pay a nightly rate of $42.

Additional Fees

If conflicts arise between a student and members of the host family and the situation is deemed unresolvable, a student will be allowed to change homestay. A minimum of two-

week notice is required. Normally, if a student requests a homestay re-placement, the student will be charged $500.00.

Homestay parents may not charge students for additional expenses unless the Homestay Coordinator has been notified and agrees to the expense. Examples of exceptions might be students who are disabled or have specific food restrictions (celiac, for example).

Behaviours to Avoid

In Canada it is a Criminal Offense to:

- smoke under the age of 19
- use alcohol or marijuana under the age of 19
- use illegal drugs at any time

If students commit any of these offences, they will be dealt with by the RCMP and/or Immigration Canada. Homestay parents are not held accountable for offences committed by students.

International students must not engage in inappropriate sexual conduct or other types of immoral activity.

International students studying at a pre-university/college level are not permitted to have a paying job in Canada.

Host families will have reasonable guidelines in place to direct the behaviour of all members of the household. If after repeated warnings students continue to disobey the homestay guidelines, they may be asked by the school to withdraw from the school program. If the student believes that the host family is asking them to do something unreasonable, inappropriate or uncomfortable, they should contact the Homestay Coordinator.

Final Words…

The way to make the most of the homestay experience is for everyone to come with an open mind and understanding heart. Students should come prepared to participate in family life and share in the responsibilities of being a family member. Homestays should be ready to welcome the student into the family and encourage them to be involved in the life of the family. Mutual understanding, sensitivity and trust will go a long way to ensuring that a positive experience will be had by all.