



Calgary Board of Education



**INTERNATIONAL Bureau**

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# **HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK**

## **Welcome Message**

We would like to extend a warm welcome to you and your family to our homestay program and thank you for your participation. Homestay is an absolutely essential part of an international student's study experience in Calgary.

Our goal is to make the very best match possible to ensure an enriching experience for the student and for the host family.

It is our sincere hope that you will develop lasting friendships with your guests and will gain a lifetime of memories.

The International Bureau Staff

## Table of Contents

International Bureau Contact Information.....	5
International Coordinator Contact Information.....	5
<b>GETTING READY</b>	
Research.....	6
Room Preparation.....	6
Key.....	6
Maps and Transportation.....	6
Orientation Information.....	6
Handbook.....	6
Home Insurance.....	6
Police Checks.....	6
Wallet Card.....	7
<b>ARRIVAL</b>	
Airport pick-up.....	7
<b>GETTING SETTLED</b>	
House Tour.....	7
Basements.....	8
Pets.....	8
Community Tour.....	8
Transportation.....	8
Household Guidelines.....	8
Household Schedule.....	9
Laundry.....	9
Telephone.....	9
Computer.....	10
Privacy.....	10
Religion.....	10
School.....	10
Bank Account.....	11
Money.....	11
Home Insurance Policy.....	11
Homestay Payments.....	11
Summer.....	11
Medical Insurance.....	12
Emergencies.....	12
Student Travel.....	12
Visiting Parents.....	12

Working While in Canada..... 12  
Drinking and Drugs..... 12

**CHALLENGES**

Jet Lag..... 13  
Culture Shock..... 13  
Canadian Customs..... 14  
Food..... 15  
Your student at School..... 15  
Communication..... 16

**DEPARTURE..... 16**

Host Family Guidelines..... 17  
Student Guidelines..... 19

## INTERNATIONAL BUREAU CONTACT INFORMATION

Host families are encouraged to contact International Bureau staff with any questions or problems they may have pertaining to a student living in their home. Your main contact is Kim Horricks, Homestay Coordinator.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Sheila Mcleod	System Principal	294-8524	smmcleod@cbe.ab.ca
Pam Baji	Program Coordinator	294-8523	pjbaji@cbe.ab.ca
Kim Horricks	Homestay Coordinator	294-8153	klhorricks@cbe.ab.ca
Ada Tse	Administrative Assistant	294-8514	altse@cbe.ab.ca
Yvonne Pryor	Office Assistant	294-8525	ympryor@cbe.ab.ca
Sook Hee Hong	Cultural Liaison (Korean)	294-8521	shhong@cbe.ab.ca

## INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Host families are encouraged to contact the International Student Coordinator at their student's school with any schooling questions or problems.

<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
Bowness	Terri-Ann Toma	286-5092	tetoma@cbe.ab.ca
Crescent Heights	Barb Mostowich	276-5521	bamostowich@cbe.ab.ca
Dr. E.P. Scarlett	Linda Kennedy	281-3366	lmkenedy@cbe.ab.ca
Ernest Manning	Sarah Schmuck	249-3131	sbschmuck@cbe.ab.ca
Henry Wise Wood	Scott Garen	253-2261	sagaren@cbe.ab.ca
James Fowler	TBD	230-4743	
Lord Beaverbrook	Sanghamitra Dhar	259-5585	sbdhar@cbe.ab.ca
Queen Elizabeth	Pat Kover	777-6380	pakover@cbe.ab.ca

## **GETTING READY**

### **Research**

Plan to do some research into the country your student is from. Finding out as much as you can about such things as climate, lifestyle, food, and customs will make long-term understanding possible.

You might even want to try to master a few simple words or phrases in their language or learn to cook a traditional meal!

### **Room Preparation**

Make sure your student's room is ready. The room should be fully furnished with a bed, dresser, lamp, desk and closet. There should also be some storage room available to the student either in the room or elsewhere.

Your student may be cold at night so ensure there are plenty of extra blankets available and even a portable heater if the room is in the basement.

### **Key**

Prepare an extra house key for your student.

### **Maps and Transportation**

Obtain a copy of the bus schedule for your area and local maps.

### **Orientation Information**

Read Welcome Letter (issued separately) and familiarize yourself with assessment/orientation details at the school.

### **Handbook**

Familiarize yourself with the Host Family Handbook.

### **Home Insurance**

Ensure adequate house insurance arrangements have been made.

### **Police Checks**

Ensure Criminal Security Check for all members in the household 16 years of age and older has been completed and submitted to the International Bureau office.

## **Wallet Card**

Prepare a wallet size contact list including home, work and cell phone numbers of all appropriate family members and also include the emergency services number for the student to carry.

## **ARRIVAL**

### **Airport Pick-up**

Arrange to pick your student up from the airport. It is helpful to take a sign with you with your student's name on it.

## **GETTING SETTLED**

### **House Tour**

When your student arrives, please give a comprehensive tour of your home. Don't assume they will know how to operate everyday items (anything from light switches to shower taps could be unfamiliar). Be as clear as you can.

Some specifics to let your student know:

- There is no drain in the middle of the floor in your bathroom so if you have a shower curtain it needs to be placed inside the bathtub.
- Toilet paper can be flushed down the toilet but nothing else like sanitary napkins or paper towels.
- Tap water is safe to drink.
- Take shoes off when entering your home.
- Are there appliances you prefer not to be handled (e.g., thermostat, BBQ)?
- Demonstrate how to lock/unlock doors and use the security system if applicable.
- Recycling practices vary around the world and this may be an unfamiliar practice to your student.
- Leave the bathroom door open when not in use.

## **Basements**

Basements are likely strange and unfamiliar to your student and if the bedroom is in the basement, this may make your student uneasy. Ensure to explain that this is typical of Canadian homes and can be seen as advantageous as it provides maximum privacy.

## **Pets**

If you own animals, they may be frightening to your student. Being aware of this and helping your student get used to your pets at a slow and comfortable pace will be appreciated.

## **Community Tour**

Take your student on a tour of your community and local area showing points of interest such as shopping malls, banks, convenience stores, community centers, fitness facilities, etc.

## **Transportation**

Your student is responsible for purchasing a monthly bus pass and will need you to explain where this can be purchased. Also, ensure your student knows where the closest bus stop/train station is to your home and which bus to take to get to and from school or elsewhere, which stops to get off at, etc.

An explanation of the bus system in Calgary will be necessary. For example, buses run frequently during peak hours but can run infrequently otherwise. Also, please explain the “honour” system on the train.

## **Household Guidelines**

It is important to discuss your household guidelines and why they are important to your family as soon as possible. By having an honest and open dialogue at the beginning, you will avoid confusion and miscommunication later. Students will appreciate knowing what is expected of them.

You may want to write or type your guidelines out (i.e., some students have a stronger level of reading than oral comprehension) and leave a copy with the student.

You will need to make the guidelines age-appropriate (e.g., curfew) and bear in mind that the student is coming from a very different household environment so adaptability will be important wherever necessary.

You may also need to re-evaluate the guidelines over time to take into account the student’s maturity, your own family’s needs, etc.

Some expectations that are typical in a home with international students are:

- Keep your room clean and tidy
- Clean up after using the bathroom
- Clean up after using the kitchen
- Notify of a change in plans (e.g., not coming home for dinner)
- Ask permission to invite guests over

### **Household Schedule**

Start thinking about your family's schedule and routine and decide how the student might fit into it. You will need to decide on areas where you can and cannot be flexible.

Some things to think about are:

- When do you eat meals?
- What time do you shower or bathe? Think about a schedule, time limit, etc.
- What time do you get up and what time do you go to bed?
- Is there a specific study time in your home?
- Will your student be allowed to have food/drink in the bedroom? Around the computer? In front of the television?

### **Laundry**

If you will be doing your student's laundry, ensure they know where to put dirty clothes and when the laundry will be done.

If your student will be responsible for doing their own laundry, be sure to explain how to work the machines, when laundry is done, and that the responsibility for folding and putting clothes away is theirs.

Ensure your student knows what to do with your clothes if they are in the machines.

### **Telephone**

Help your student to purchase a long distance phone card and ask that it be used when making long distance phone calls.

If you have one phone line that all family members share, ensure your student knows about time limits.

Explain your phone's features, if applicable, like call waiting.

## **Computer**

If your student will be allowed to use your family computer, ensure you explain about time limits, downloading restrictions, etc.

### **Please note:**

If your student brings a laptop and wants a dedicated internet connection installed, we strongly suggest you install this in a common area if possible instead of in the bedroom. Students who have computers in their rooms will sometimes rely heavily on the ability to be connected to family and friends in their home country and do not assimilate with the host family or with life in Canada. If the bedroom is the best place for the computer, you may want to monitor the computer usage and put time limits on it if warranted.

All costs associated with internet installation will be the student's.

## **Privacy**

Ensure your student knows you will respect their privacy by knocking on the bedroom door before entering and ask the same in return.

Ensure it is understood that you will not pry into personal belongings, phone conversations, mail, etc.

## **Religion**

Attending church may be an important part of your student's life. If you attend church, your student may want to attend with you or may choose to attend their own church. Under no circumstances must they be **required** to attend your church or practice your religious beliefs. If requested, please help your student to find a church in your neighbourhood.

## **School**

High schools have various intake procedures. Refer to the letter that was sent to you before the start of the semester for the intake procedures at your student's school.

Plan to accompany your student to their assessment appointment (if applicable), school orientation/registration appointments as well as taking them to school on the first day.

If the school is having an orientation and your student does not arrive in time to attend, please contact the co-ordinator at the school to make alternate arrangements.

Assist with completing all required forms and ensure your student understands about extra fees due at the school (i.e., Phys. Ed clothes and costs, extracurricular expenses, textbooks, etc.).

Introduce yourself to the coordinator at the school so you can keep in close contact throughout the semester/school year.

## **Bank Account**

Help your student set up a bank account with chequing privileges. Encourage your student to pay the homestay monthly fee with cheques and discourage them from carrying around large sums of cash.

## **Money**

Students are required to have their own spending money to cover incidental expenses, like entertainment, personal items, school supplies and transportation fees.

Students who choose to participate in family holidays, travel or any extracurricular activities where costs are incurred are expected to share the costs. If the student chooses not to participate in the activity, the homestay parents and the student must make alternate arrangements that are acceptable to all parties.

However, if your family eats out on a regular basis, the student should not be expected to cover the costs for that.

It is a good idea to discuss the extra costs with your student up front. When expectations are clear from the beginning, it is less awkward than waiting until there is a situation and dealing with it then.

## **Home Insurance Policy**

Contact your homeowner's insurance company and let them know you will have an extra person living in your home and ensure you have adequate coverage.

## **Homestay Payments**

- The rent period is from the first to the last calendar day of each month.
- The rent is \$650.00 per month (Please note: this fee will increase to \$700 per month as of September, 2007).
- Students or their agent will reimburse the host family for all days that fall outside the monthly time period at a rate of \$21 per night.
- The rent is payable on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.
- Students or their agents will pay their homestay fee by cheque or cash to the homestay parents directly unless otherwise agreed upon by the International Bureau.

## **Summer**

During the summer break, if you want to use the student's accommodation (e.g. for guests, short-term summer students), ask your student to pack up the room neatly.

## **Medical Insurance**

All international students are required to have health insurance for the duration of their studies and we have made these arrangements on their behalf. Your student has been given a card to carry and all policy information, claim procedures and claim forms can be found on our web site at [cbeinternational.ca/apply\\_health.htm](http://cbeinternational.ca/apply_health.htm).

For all services under \$500, the student will need to pay up front and then submit a claim form for reimbursement. Your student may need some help from you when submitting a claim.

For hospital and physician services over \$500, the student may be billed for the service and can complete the assignment section on the Claims Form and submit to the insurer. If the service is covered, the insurance company will often pay the bill directly to the service provider.

## **Emergencies**

Ensure your student knows to dial 9-1-1 in case of an emergency.

If there is an emergency involving your student, always call 9-1-1 first. Then, contact the homestay coordinator with the details of the emergency.

## **Student Travel**

If students are planning to travel while studying with the Calgary Board of Education, they must have written permission from their natural parent(s) and from the homestay coordinator. Any travel that a student undertakes should only occur during school vacation time.

## **Visiting Parents**

If your student's parents will be visiting, you are not expected to provide accommodation for them. They should be asked to make their own accommodation arrangements at a Calgary hotel.

## **Working While in Canada**

Students in Canada on a Study Permit (Visa) are not allowed to hold a paying job.

## **Drinking and Drugs**

Both are strictly prohibited. Please notify the homestay coordinator immediately if you are experiencing this with your student.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **Jet Lag**

The ill effects of jet lag will be much easier if your student sets their watch immediately to local time right away. Also, suggest they drink plenty of water, get lots of fresh air and avoid sleeping during the day if possible. Your student will benefit from getting into a sleeping pattern that matches local time as soon as possible.

### **Culture Shock**

Upon arrival, your student may be jet-lagged, tired, emotional, homesick, and feeling very vulnerable and will immediately start to feel culture shock.

#### **I. What is Culture Shock?**

Culture shock is the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment. It is feeling lost and alone and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate.

Culture shock is a very normal reaction to a new and different place. It is expected when a person moves from a familiar environment to a new setting where language, food, clothing, manners and social relations are very different. The person has been removed from familiar patterns of communication and the ways of normally expressing feelings. Friends and family are being missed and routine activities are a struggle, such as grocery shopping or taking the bus.

Culture shock will be intensified by the language difficulty. If your student seems quiet or unresponsive, it may be that they are having trouble concentrating or are too tired to grasp an involved conversation and may need to “shut down” periodically.

As well as being tired, there will be some frustration at not being able to communicate or make themselves understood. Being forced to bring communication down to a very basic level can be difficult.

You can assist your student by being patient, and speaking slowly and clearly. Writing things down can be helpful as sometimes written comprehension is stronger than oral. You will also need to be prepared to repeat things several times, even if your student says they understand what you have said. In some cultures, it is considered impolite to admit you do not understand what a person is saying.

Help your student by giving time to adjust to the very new and different environment. Eventually he/she will settle into a normal pattern but knowing there will be some ups and downs will help you and your family to understand and be supportive to your new family member.

## II. Stages of Culture Shock

Your student will go through different stages as he/she settles into a new life in Canada. Each stage can be ongoing or appear only at certain times.

The first stage is the “honeymoon” stage, when everything is new and exciting.

During the second stage, your student may have some difficult times and crises in daily life. You may see difficulties in communicating, impatience, anger, sadness and feelings of inadequacy. This happens while trying to adapt to a new culture that is very different from one’s own culture.

During the third stage, your student will start to gain some understanding of the new culture and start to experience pleasure. They will not feel lost anymore and will start to have a sense of direction. They will be more familiar with their environment and want to belong.

In the fourth stage, there is the realization that the new culture has good and bad things to offer. A sense of belonging starts to develop and new goals for living in the new culture may be formed.

The fifth stage is called “*re-entry shock*.” This happens when your student returns to his/her home country. People and customs seem to be different. Your student will think a lot about the experiences in Canada and miss the friends that have been made. Your student may even wish they did not return home.

These stages happen at different times for everyone and each person reacts differently. Some stages will be longer and more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the effects of culture shock.

You should also know that your own family will experience some culture shock as you get used to having a new member join your household. Some of the stages will be similar to those experienced by your student.

### Canadian Customs

Your customs may be very different and unfamiliar to your student and vice versa. For instance, we tend to eat dinner quite a bit earlier than many countries. When talking about differences, it is important to discuss them as cultural differences rather than right vs. wrong ways of doing things.

Some of the differences you will see may be obvious like table manners and others may be subtler like opinions about the roles of women, parents or other ethnic cultures. This may affect your student’s inclination to help out around the house or how he/she communicates with your family. Conversations from the beginning about expectations will avoid unpleasantness later.

## **Food**

One of the biggest areas of difficulty for international students is around food, which they tend to miss the most and may have trouble adjusting to our Canadian diet. Please consider taking your student to one of the many ethnic grocery stores around the city a couple of times a month to stock up on “comfort” foods.

Students sometimes bring or are sent “care packages” from home. Encourage your student to take advantage of this and use it as an opportunity to ask about their food.

If you are hosting an Asian student, consider purchasing an inexpensive rice cooker. As rice is a staple in the Asian diet, this can be a very useful addition to your kitchen.

It is not uncommon to have students contact us and tell us there is no food to eat in the home and they are hungry all the time. When we follow up with the host family, they are very surprised by this and tell us there is a refrigerator full of food and that the student only needs to help himself/herself.

Here is where the miscommunication tends to be:

- the student may not know how to cook/prepare meals
- the available food is unfamiliar
- the concept of “helping yourself” may seem inappropriate or rude to the student

It will be useful to spend the first couple of days helping your student to function in your kitchen until a level of comfort is reached.

## **Your student at school**

Your student will want opportunities to make Canadian friends. Do you have a neighbour who goes to the same school that would ride the bus with your student? Do you have friends with children the same age that would take your student skiing? Any chance you have to help your student make connections with Canadian teenagers will be appreciated by your student and will make his/her experience a richer one.

Encourage your student to join extracurricular activities at the school. All schools have a variety of clubs and getting involved is extremely beneficial.

Activities outside of school hours should also be encouraged. For example, if they play soccer in their home country, try to find a community soccer team they can join.

Sometimes, despite your best intentions, your student will not take advantage of your suggestions. Try not to be discouraged by this. There may be a number of contributing factors and sometimes it's merely the individual's personality.

## **Communication**

Establishing open and honest communication patterns from the start will be beneficial to everyone. Host families are sometimes unsure of how to address issues or problems and this can lead to tension and conflict.

Offering a warm, safe and secure environment where everyone feels comfortable to ask questions or talk about issues and problems will ensure that you foster a healthy relationship that can be relatively free of problems.

Try to address issues as they come up. Difficulties arise when a problem is left to grow. The person being targeted is understandably surprised when the inevitable explosion occurs.

Your student is still a teenager and will need regular reminders of your expectations, just like your own children do! You will need to continuously think about your own actions, reactions and explanations.

Canadian communication styles can be very different from other cultures. During business communication, for example, we like to get to the heart of the matter, discuss it, solve it and then move on. Personal conversations sometimes involve expressing feelings. These methods of problem solving may be startling for your student especially if they come from a culture where expressing personal feelings is discouraged or even unacceptable. It is important to realize there are different communication styles at work and to try to come up with an approach that works for all parties.

Your student will need encouragement and patience and using reassuring phrases like "It must be difficult for you to talk about this" will go a long way to building a trusting relationship.

If you are finding that, despite your best efforts, things are not going the way you want them too, feel free to contact our homestay coordinator who will be happy to come out and facilitate a discussion. Chances are, what you are encountering has been experienced by another host family and there may be a solution or compromise that works for everyone.

## **DEPARTURE**

Arrange to take your student to the airport when they are returning home.

If they would like to ship any items home, please assist them with this.

## **Host Family Guidelines (reprinted from the application package)**

Host families shall:

- Take responsibility for making sure school fees are paid, applications for renewal are completed and submitted, bus pass is in place, bank accounts are set up (if applicable) and ensure the student knows how to get to and from school using public transportation;
- Provide three nutritious meals per day, seven days a week (unless otherwise agreed to by program). An evening meal shall be prepared and left if the family is not home for dinner or if the student comes home late from classes (unless otherwise agreed to by the program);
- Ensure that the student does not have to prepare their own meals on a regular basis (unless otherwise agreed to by the program);
- Interact with the student on a daily basis and include the student in appropriate family activities;
- Provide each student with a private bedroom, which no other family member will visit for the duration of the program;
- Ensure that the student does not visit any private area of the house, which includes the bedrooms of other family members, ensuite bathrooms, and any bathroom when another person is present;
- Provide each student with a key to the house and the code for a residential alarm; if one is used;
- Speak English when the student is present;
- It is the responsibility of the homestay family to collect all rent and deposits directly from the student (unless otherwise agreed to by the program).
- Maintain the homestay fee at the rate determined by the International Bureau, Calgary Board of Education with no additional charges to the student;
- Ensure that family members do not borrow money from the student and the student does not borrow money from family members;
- Maintain a homeowner's insurance policy throughout the homestay period covering liability claims in respect of the student.
- Contact the International Bureau at the Calgary Board of Education if problems arise between student and other family members; cooperate with the Homestay Coordinator and Calgary Board of Education staff in trying to reach a reasonable, equitable solution for all concerned;

- Inform Calgary Board of Education officials of all other students or houseguests living in the house, including those who take up residence after the student arrives;
- Agree not to host more than two students at the same time;
- Before accepting a student inform International Bureau, Calgary Board of Education of plans to be away from the home for any period of time during the placement and ensure alternate arrangements are in place;
- Ensure the student is not required to babysit;
- Treat the student with respect and kindness and expect the same in return;
- Never resort to abusive, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour;
- Never initiate or participate in a sexually-oriented discussion, the viewing of sexually explicit photographs, written materials or films with the student;
- Always be suitably clothed and covered;
- Never touch the student, other than to shake his/her hand in greeting or to say goodbye;
- Be aware that students who choose to participate in family holidays and/or travel where costs are incurred are expected to assist in sharing the costs. If the student chooses not to participate in the activity, the homestay parents and the student must make alternate arrangements that are acceptable to all parties;
- Take an active role in supporting the student.
- Provide the Calgary Board of Education with a copy of a recent Police Security Clearance for all members of your household 16 years of age and older.
- Provide a warm secure, healthy, environment for international homestay students.
- Respect the student's privacy and expect the student to respect theirs.

Our students are particularly vulnerable because they are unfamiliar with Canadian customs and language and generally speaking, may not know to whom to turn for help. If a student reports that there are problems in the home such as alcohol or drug abuse, sexual impropriety, inappropriate conduct, or abusive language or behaviour, the student will be removed from the home without notice and legal or other action will be taken if warranted.

Moreover, the Calgary Board of Education reserves the right to move a student without the usual advance notice if a situation is unsatisfactory or if problems cannot be

resolved between family members and student. When a student is moved, the family may be required to return a portion of their homestay fee or may not received a final fee payment.

The homestay parents agree to assume all liability for loss or damage to their home caused by the student(s) and hereby releases the Calgary Board of Education and its agents and employees from all liability arising out of the participation in the program, including, without limitation for property damage or loss, or the debts, conducts or actions of the students assigned to the home. We understand that the students are responsible for their own debts, conduct and actions while in the homestay program.

### **Student Guidelines (reprinted from the application package)**

- Students will pay the homestay fee directly to the family (unless other arrangements have been agreed upon by the International Bureau) in full by cash or cheque, at the beginning of each month. As of July 1, 2004 the monthly rent will be \$650 per month for accommodation and three meals a day. This amount is not open to negotiation.
- Students who arrive from abroad prior to the start of the month and begin their homestay at that time will be asked to pay the families \$21/day until the start of the initial rental month.
- As the homestay placement is for Calgary Board of Education, students who withdraw from the program must also withdraw from the homestay program. Any arrangements to stay on with a host family after withdrawing from the program must be made privately with the family.
- Students must promptly reimburse their families if they cause any damage in the home.
- Students must use a calling card for all long distance phone calls. Phone cards are an extremely inexpensive way to call nationally and internationally.
- Students who choose to participate in family holidays, travel or any extracurricular activities where costs are incurred are expected to share the costs. If the student chooses not to participate in the activity, the homestay parents and the student must make alternate arrangements that are acceptable to all parties.
- Students must give the homestay family and International Bureau homestay coordinator one full month's notice if they wish to leave either the family or the program.

The student agrees to:

- Make an effort to participate in family activities.
- Show consideration and tolerance to all host family members.
- Respect household rules.
- Inform the family if he/she will not be home for a meal, will arrive home late in the evening, or stay out overnight.
- Invite guests to the home only with the knowledge and permission of the host family.
- Consult the host family before using household appliances or equipment and use them in ways approved of by the family.
- Use the telephone for reasonable lengths of times, ask permission to make long distance calls and make these calls collect or using a calling card.
- Clean up after himself/herself in the home.
- Help himself/herself to food only with the knowledge and permission of the family.
- Exercise consideration and good judgment.
- Promptly reimburse the family for any damage caused in the home.
- Stay out of host bedrooms, private rooms, or the bathroom when they are occupied.
- Refrain from borrowing money from host family members.
- Refrain from abusive, aggressive or inappropriate behaviour. Never initiate or participate in a sexually-oriented discussion with host family members.
- Refrain from participating in the viewing of sexually explicit photographs, written materials, films, or Internet sites in the home.
- Always be suitably clothed and covered when in the presence of host family members.
- Refrain from touching host family members in an inappropriate manner.

- Refrain from changing host homes without the knowledge and permission of the homestay program.
- Refrain from driving an automobile while in the Calgary Board of Education homestay program.
- Abide by the laws of Canada and Alberta including the Criminal Code and Human Rights Code.

### **Conditions of Placement**

Calgary Board of Education reserves the right to ask a student to leave the homestay program at any time if the student's behaviour in the home is unreasonable or unacceptable, or if the student fails to comply with the Regulations or Guidelines.