



HOST FAMILY INFORMATION PACKET

Being a host family is an exciting opportunity!

Serving as a host family will open a new world to you and provide a learning experience that will impact your life forever. Your family not only gets to help your student learn about the American way of life but you also get to learn about their culture as well. Thank you for taking the time to review this material. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

PROGRAM RULES

HOST FAMILY AND
STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

WHO PAYS?

WHAT'S NEXT?

**MILLINOCKET SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT**

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

199 State Street

P.O. Box 30

Millinocket, Maine 04462

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international@millinocketschools.org



**INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

STEARNS HIGH SCHOOL
MILLINOCKET, MAINE

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Millinocket School Department
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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the International Student Exchange Program?

The International Student Exchange Program was founded at Stearns High School in 2012. Our program provides the opportunity to an increasing number of international high school students between the ages of 14 and 17 to study abroad in the United States. They attend Stearns High School full time and are expected to integrate and become involved in our community. This program has benefited our school department financially because these students pay tuition to attend high school here. Our community, staff, and students at Stearns High School have also benefited from this program by making new friends and learning about a different culture firsthand. The rewards are great for everyone involved!

Why do international students choose to come to Stearns?

International students benefit from this program by learning English, attending an American high school, learning about American culture, and having the opportunity to graduate with a U.S. High School Diploma. A U.S. diploma can increase an international student's chances to be accepted into colleges and universities in the U.S.; something these students strive for.

How long do students stay?

Students who come for a full academic year arrive in late August and leave late June, for a total of 10 months. Students also have the option to come only 1 semester (August - December or January - June).

Who can host?

Host parents are of varied economic, racial, and religious backgrounds who are age 24 or older. We accept many types of families; single parent families, families with children of any age, and childless families. Host parents are open minded, enjoy meeting new people, and have room in their home and hearts to share a wide range of activities and lifestyles with an international high school student.

What are the rewards of hosting?

Your family will learn the international student's culture, customs, and traditions as well as get to share in the American way-of-life and American values. Many lasting lifelong friendships have been formed with this program.

Do I get paid to host?

Yes. A \$750.00 monthly stipend is paid to each host family during the duration of their exchange student's stay. Your monthly stipend starts the month your student arrives at your home and ends the month your student leaves. Your stipend will be prorated depending on arrival and departure date. This stipend remains the same no matter how long your student stays in your home.

How do I get paid?

You will receive a check by mail from the Millinocket School Department each month.

Will Taxes be Deducted From My Pay?

No.

Do I get any travel reimbursement?

A stipend is provided for transportation upon the student's arrival and departure to and from the airport. If you are unable to provide transportation to and from the airport, the school will provide transportation. A stipend may be paid to you for any special events your exchange student is needing transportation for. Please let us

know in advance. Family trips, school drop offs, to and from a store will not be reimbursed and are part of the host family expectations.

Is a background check required?

Yes. By law it is required we perform a background check on each person who resides in the home and is over the age of 18.

What documentation will I need to provide?

By law, it is required of all household members over the age of 18 to provide a state issued valid driver's license or identification card, as well as proof of auto insurance for all vehicles in the home.

Is there a student screening process?

Yes. We work only with agencies who recruit students who are excellent candidates for the program. What we look for are class rank, excellent teacher recommendations, English language ability, positive personality, a wide variety of interests such as sports, music or hobbies, and adaptability to living in a foreign country.

Will my home need to be inspected?

Yes. A visit from the International Program Coordinator will take place before your student arrives. Periodic visits during your student's stay may occur at times that are convenient to all parties involved.

Who is my contact person throughout my time hosting with the program?

The Superintendent of Millinocket School Department and International Program Coordinator will be in communication with you throughout your hosting time. You'll have their contact information including a way to contact them outside of office hours. The International Program Coordinator will either call or email you monthly to check in. The Superintendent and International Program Coordinator will help support you with any questions or adjustments you may have throughout the year. You are encouraged to reach out between monthly check-ins if you have any questions or concerns, big or small!

What if there is a medical emergency with my student?

If there is a medical emergency you should call 911. After you call 911 you should contact the Superintendent and they will proceed with the correct steps to contact the student's family.

Will an agreement be drafted between student and host family?

Yes. Each host family and student will sign a Host Family/Student Agreement which details the responsibility of the host family and student, expectations, and responsibility of all parties.

Does the host parent have legal guardianship over the exchange student?

The student's parents will assign the Millinocket School Department authority and responsibility to manage the student's care and education while in the United States.

What if my student wants to travel back home?

Students may go home or elsewhere in the United States during vacation periods. All costs of these trips are the responsibility of the student, with prior approval from the student's parents, school staff and superintendent.

What are my primary responsibilities as a host parent?

You will provide your exchange student with a safe and supportive home for the academic year and encourage your student to participate in all aspects of family life; they are like a member of your family! You'll provide your student with a bedroom (which can be shared by another child in the same age range and sex), adequate lighting, bed (cots are not acceptable), dresser, closet, quiet place to study, meals (except school breakfast and lunch which is provided and paid for by the school), wireless internet connection in the home, transportation to

and from school in the mornings and at dismissal (unless they'll be riding the bus) and to and from school related activities. Family outings you'll include your student, including eating out at restaurants which will be paid by you. English needs to be the primary language spoken in the home.

Do I need to provide medical coverage for my exchange student?

No. Students will have medical coverage through the Millinocket School Department and will receive a medical card to carry with them. We will also have a copy on file.

Can I host more than one student?

Yes you can, but students can't be from the same country.

Can I request the sex/gender of the student or from which country they come from?

Yes. We have a section in our application where you can add your preferences for your exchange student. We want to make the best match possible and want host families to be comfortable with their student.

What is expected of the exchange student?

exchange students are here on a cultural and academic exchange program. They are expected to attend class and maintain a passing grade. It is expected of them to follow all local, state and federal laws as well as the host family rules and responsibilities.

What kind of visas do the students receive?

Students receive a F-1 student academic visa.

Will I need to provide spending money for my exchange student?

No. Students are expected to have their own spending money for eating out on their own, specialty toiletries, clothes, entertainment, extracurricular school activities, personal expenses, haircuts, doctor co-pay, or any other personal expense not outlined in the host family expectations.

Do I need to cook special meals for my student?

No. You will cook meals like you normally do. A nice gesture would be to ask your exchange student what they like to eat. If they have any food allergies you will be notified in advance. Some students are good cooks and may want to cook some meals for you!

How will my student get to and from school?

Your student may take the bus to and from school, have a family member or friend drive them, you can drive them, or if you live close by they may walk or ride a bike. Use best judgment with winter temperatures and work with your student on what they are most comfortable with.

Is my student allowed to drive?

Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle except if they have completed and passed a State of Maine driving education course. Students need permission from their parents to take this course. Most students are here for a short time so a driving course is not necessary.

Who is responsible for booking flights?

The student will work with their parents, the superintendent and the International Program Coordinator regarding flights to and from the U.S.

What do I do when my student first arrives at my home?

We encourage you to show your student around your home, especially their bedroom because they will be very tired from the trip. Have a list of phone numbers, emergency numbers, and the Home Expectations Worksheet ready to be filled out. We will provide this worksheet to you as a guide. Do not go into detail with family rules yet, your exchange student will be very tired from the trip and will probably want to sleep. Some students will

want to open a bank account right off or know where the closest grocery store is. Other areas of interest to them might be the school, library, areas to shop, post office, or restaurants. Many of the students have experienced dorm life from a very early age and will need to adjust to home life which they are here to experience!

What happens if placement does not work out?

The Superintendent and International Coordinator will look into any issues that arise. Sometimes issues are a cultural misunderstanding and can be easily resolved. If all parties cannot come to an agreement then a different host family will be found.

What happens if my student has academic problems?

The Superintendent, International Coordinator and teachers will step in and work with the student to determine what action to take. You will be granted access to your student's grades in Powerschool. This will help you monitor their grades as well.

Am I required to show them America?

If you are going on vacation, it would be nice to include your exchange student along for the trip, but you are not required to do so. Arrangements can be made to find another host family during your absence. You do not need to plan any special trips to show your student America while they are here.

Do I need to do any research regarding my student's native country?

Prior to your student's arrival it would be nice to do some research of their customs and traditions. You may want to check out information at your local library, travel videos on YouTube, documentaries, books or National Geographic magazines. You could also purchase a map and highlight the area your student is from and display it in the home where everyone can see it.

What happens at the airport when I pick up my student?

It's important to make your student feel welcome right from the start. Arrive early and have a welcome sign with their name on it. Students are relieved when they see smiling faces! After they claim their luggage, engage in small talk as you drive home. This is an exciting time for all! Encourage them to contact their parents after they have arrived safely.

What can I expect in the first few days?

When your student arrives at your home, show them their bedroom. They will be extremely tired from the trip. Some of these students travel up to 48 hours. They also may be anxious and nervous. Allow them time to unwind, and sleep. They may sleep a lot the first 3 days. Go over family rules and expectations, emergency numbers. Don't talk too fast or too much, or bombard them with questions. It will take time for your student to understand you. Remember, adjusting to a new culture takes time. Be ready to learn and teach. Try to be patient and understanding and most important keep a sense of humor!

What can I expect in the first few months?

The key to hosting is a combination of support, patience and love! Bonding may not happen immediately. It takes time for both of you to adjust. If you suspect culture shock is taking place, remember that this is normal. If your exchange student sleeps excessively, is irritable, spends all day in their room, uncommunicative, frequent comparisons to "things are better at home", weight loss or gain please talk to the International Program Coordinator. Remember, this behavior is normal and not to take it personally.

What kinds of things would be fun to do with my student?

- Take a tour of Millinocket - tell about the history of our town
- Visiting Baxter State Park
- Watching TV
- Apple Picking or Corn Maze
- Shopping in Freeport or Portland
- Birthday Parties
- Playing Sports; football, basketball, baseball, field hockey, soccer, tennis, etc.
- Shopping in Bangor
- BBQ's
- Cook
- Do Homework
- Watch a Movie
- Go for a Run
- Go to Church
- Go Camping
- Play Basketball at Open Gym
- Weight Lift
- Dinner at a Restaurant
- Spend a Day at Camp
- Go Watch a Movie
- Do Crossword Puzzle
- Ice Fishing
- Fishing
- Kayaking or boating
- Skiing or Snowboard
- Travel

Program Rules

It is the responsibility of the host family and exchange student to know and follow the program rules. Rules in bold are non-negotiable and could result in immediate action. All other program rule violations will be assessed by the superintendent and International Program Coordinator to determine an appropriate course of action.

Student Program Rules:

- 1. Students must abide by all U.S. laws**
- 2. Students are not allowed to buy or drink alcohol.**
- 3. Any verbal harassment or physical altercation will not be allowed.**
- 4. The use of drugs for non-medical reasons are strictly forbidden.**
5. Students are not allowed to hitchhike.
6. The purchase, carry or use of firearms are forbidden.
7. Students are not allowed to work a part-time job. The F-1 visa does not allow it.
8. Students are not allowed to drive any motor vehicle.
- 9. Smoking or possession of tobacco is forbidden.**
10. Students are required to attend school, unless an excused absence is given from the host family such as sickness or family trip.
11. Students must receive a passing grade of 71 or higher in each class in order to receive a diploma and graduate.
12. All school rules must be obeyed by the student.
13. All homework and assignments must be completed by the student.
14. Students are not allowed to enter a bar, gambling houses, pornographic shops, or any establishment that does not allow under the age of 18.
15. Students must abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and help with household chores if asked of them.
16. Except in a case of emergency, students must follow the appropriate chain of communication and contact the superintendent or International Program Coordinator if there is an issue with their host family.
17. Students will not be allowed to change host families and schools without mediation or due process. With the exception of emergencies, host family changes will not be considered during the first 30 days of arrival.
Students are allowed to travel alone only if there is:
 - a. Approval by the superintendent
 - b. Approval by the host family
 - c. A signed Permission to Travel Form by the student's natural parents
 - d. Approval by the student's teachers (only if school days are missed)
18. Students must show respect to their host family and school staff
19. The engagement of any sexual contact or sexual activity by a student that is culturally inappropriate in the U.S. is forbidden, including any members of the host family or minors.
20. Sexual intercourse on-program is prohibited.
21. All students must have insurance coverage through the Millinocket School Department.
22. Parents and friends may visit the student during the academic year upon the approval of the superintendent. The host family is not responsible for lodging or transportation.

23. No student is allowed to enter into a contractual agreement be it business, marital, or any other agreements while on the program.
24. Students are expected to return home in the same physical condition as they arrived; tattoos, piercings, or any other drastic physical change to their appearance is not allowed.
25. Students are to limit daily international phone calls, emails or other digital communication with friends and family back home as it may cause adjustment issues.
26. Students should make every effort to integrate with non-international students at their school and with their host family.
27. Students must notify the superintendent and International Program Coordinator if they intend on traveling without their host family. This needs to be done BEFORE flight arrangements are made.
28. A Travel Form needs to be filled out and signed by the student, student's parents and the superintendent prior to a student traveling alone.

Host Family Program Rules:

1. Host family may not ask the exchange student for money or make private arrangements for monthly stipends from the exchange student, exchange student's parents or exchange student's agency.
2. Host family is responsible for keeping a clean, warm and safe home for the exchange student.
3. The use of space heaters are not allowed in the exchange student's bedroom.
4. Asking for money from your exchange student to pay for heating oil, household groceries or toiletries, utility bills, household maintenance, trash removal, etc. is not allowed.
5. Students should not be left alone overnight. If you need to take a trip out of town, please let the International Program Coordinator know and they will pay for and arrange a rest break for you with a school approved individual or family. In general, a rest break will be for up to two days, no more than two times during the stay. If a rest break for a longer period of time is needed, then a deduction of \$25 per day will be made from the stipend to a maximum of \$500 per month. Rest breaks will be approved by the superintendent.

Host Family Expectations

All approvals for variance of expectations will be authorized by the Superintendent of Schools

House Rules

- Clarify your expectations early on.
- If you have specific rules such as no TV after 10pm, no eating in the bedroom, or no visitors after 7pm consider putting this in writing.
- Be certain “unspoken rules” are communicated to your exchange student, such as a certain chair is reserved for a certain family member, or a certain family member needs the restroom at 5am each morning.
- Explain why you are setting rules. This will help your exchange student to better understand how your family and American families live.

Food and Meals

- Let your exchange student know what time you normally eat each day and on weekends.
- Ask your exchange student what meals they like to eat and what they dislike.
- Provide a variety of foods including proteins, fruits, vegetables.

Respect

- Respect cultural or religious differences.
- Respect student’s privacy in their bedroom.
- Listen to ask about additional needs.
- Be open and honest. Express concerns in a respectful manner.

Family Life

- Treat your exchange student as a member of the family, not a guest.
- Treat them as you would want your own child treated in another country.
- Include your exchange student in family activities.

Bedroom

- Provide a comfortable, private room with a bed (bottom and top sheet, blankets, pillow and pillowcase) dresser, closet, and if you have a desk, lamp, or shelves for your exchange student to study that would be nice.
- Respect the privacy of your exchange student.
- Unless there is an emergency, you should ask for permission to enter your exchange student’s room.

Household Chores

- As a member of the family, exchange students are expected to help with light household chores such as setting the table for dinner, taking out the trash, etc.
- exchange students are not expected to do deep cleaning, babysit, look after elderly or any other heavy household chore.
- You may not ask or expect your exchange student to do chores for you in exchange for hosting them.

Language

- Encourage your exchange student to speak in English.
- Be patient with your exchange student as they learn the English language.

Culture

- As a host family you are the first American representative your exchange student may encounter and will learn our culture through your examples and daily living.
- Share family customs and traditions.

- Ask your exchange student how things are done in their culture as a way for them to express their home life.

Transportation

- During school, your student may take the bus to and from school, have a family member or friend drive them, or you can drive them. If you live close by they may walk or ride a bike. If temperatures fall below 5 degrees in the winter, we do not want exchange students to walk. Contact the school and transportation arrangements will be made.
- Please be willing to drive your exchange student to school related practices or find alternative transportation.

Activities

- Your student may want to participate in sports or performing arts shows on stage. Please make every effort to go to their games or performances. This shows your exchange student you care and are interested in their life!

Exchange Student Expectations

All approvals for variance of expectations will be authorized by the Superintendent of Schools

House Rules

- Your host family will explain to you their home rules. If you do not understand a rule, ask your host family what the rule means.
- Respect your host family rules and expectations.
- If at any time you are not sure what to do in the home, ask your host family.

Food and Meals

- Be on time for family meals.
- If you will be late or absent for a family meal, call your host family to let them know.
- If you have dislikes to a food or allergies, tell your host family.
- Offer to help set the table, clean up after the meal or wash dishes.
- Let your host family know if you liked the meal by saying "this is very good!".

Respect

- Respect the house rules.
- Respect cultural or religious differences.
- Be honest. Express concerns in a respectful way.

Family Life

- Try to participate in family activities and meals.
- You are encouraged to talk openly with your host family about what you'd like to do for fun.
- Discuss any concerns with your host family.

Bedroom

- Students should keep their room clean.
- Your host family is not expected to clean your bedroom.

Household Chores

- As a member of the family, you should ask your host family how you can help with chores.
- Some examples of light chores you may do are taking out the trash, washing dishes, setting the table for dinner.
- If children are in your home, you may read or play with them, but you are not expected to babysit them.

Language

- You must practice english each day
- Your home and school is a great place to practice your english.

Cultural

- Your host family will want to share their culture with you.
- You should share your culture with your host family.

Transportation

- During school, you may take the bus to and from school, or have a family member or friend drive you. If you live close by you may walk or ride a bike. If temperatures fall below 5 degrees in the winter, we do not want you to walk. Your host family will contact the school for transportation arrangements.
- If you participate in school sports or other school related activities, please let your host family know of practice dates and times so they can arrange for transportation.

Activities

- You here are to experience as much as you can and encouraged to participate in school activities such as sports, performing arts, etc. Please let your host family know when your games are or performances so they can arrange to be there!

Who Pays?

The following fall under the host parent's responsibility:

- Dinner Monday through Friday (the school pays for breakfast and lunch)
- All weekend meals
- Snacks within reason. Buy what you normally buy for your family. If your exchange student wants extra snacks or costly specialty snacks, they should pay for this.
- Restaurant meals if your exchange student is with you (student pays their own if they go to a restaurant with friends or alone).
- Take-out if the family is ordering it
- Activities if accompanied by you (ball games, trip to the movies, etc.)
- Toiletries within reason. Buy what you normally buy for your family.
- All fuel to and from school or rides to a game or practice. The student should not have to pay for gas.
- All costs related to laundry.
- Any items you wish to purchase to accommodate your exchange student such as bed, bedding, linens, etc.
- If your family celebrates holidays with gifts, then purchasing a gift should be included in your costs.
- If your family is taking a big trip (Disney) you will pay for all costs related to the trip except plane fare and hotel. Your exchange student will be given the option to go or not. If they do go, your student will pay for plane ticket and hotel.

The following fall under the exchange student's responsibility:

- All clothing including shoes
- Any school supplies
- Special or costly snacks
- Restaurant meals without your host family
- Take-out orders without your host family
- Any activity without your host family
- Special or costly toiletries
- All travel expenses related to trips taken without the host family
- Cell phone
- Any books or reading material
- Any plane fare or hotel cost if your host family is taking a big trip. You will be given the option to not go. Your host family will pay for other related big trip costs such as meals, events or shows, etc.

What's Next?

APPLICATION AND AGREEMENT: You're ready to host! What's next? We'll have you fill out the Host Family Application, Background Check form, Proof of Auto Insurance Form, and Host Family Agreement which the International Program Coordinator has copies of. PLEASE NOTE: any member of your household who is age 18 or over will also need to fill out a background check form. All licensed drivers in your household must provide a copy of their license and proof of auto insurance for all vehicles.

We prefer the use of our online application, found on our website. After the initial application you will need to come in person to the school to sign the background check waiver. If that option is not available to you, you can request a printed copy (or pdf) mailed to you by emailing the International Program Coordinator at cehret@millinocketschools.org.

Sign all forms and return to:

Millinocket School Department
ATTENTION International Program Coordinator
P.O. Box 30
Millinocket Maine 04462

Once we receive your signed forms, we'll submit the background check, which normally takes 48 hours. Once all forms and background check has been approved by the superintendent, you will receive a call from the International Program Coordinator letting you know your forms are complete and to proceed with the following...

PICTURES AND FAMILY PROFILE: We like to send each exchange student and their parents a photo of their assigned host family along with a family profile. The profile can mention a bit about yourselves, your home, town, and lifestyle. Please send this information to: international@millinocketschools.org.

IN-HOME VISIT: The International Program Coordinator will call you to schedule a visit and meet all family members living in the home.

PLACEMENT: After all of the above information is compiled, the superintendent and International Program Coordinator will begin the process of matching students with host families. We will contact you as soon as a match has been made!

PREPARE FOR STUDENT ARRIVAL: You will be contacted by the International Program Coordinator with your student's name, profile, photo and arrival date. This is a good time to make arrangements for pick up at the airport. If you cannot pick your student up, let the school know and arrangements will be made.

HOST FAMILY ORIENTATION: We will make every effort to host a group orientation before the start of the school year with all host families and students. This is a great time to get to know other host families, and the students to get to know each other. We will let you know a date and time.

Contact Information

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