

COUNSELOR and LOCAL COORDINATOR

HANDBOOK

District 5495

**ARIZONA, USA**

Rotary Youth Exchange Counselor

**Counselor Job Description**

The job of Counselor for a Rotary exchange student is important and can be very rewarding. As a counselor, you are the liaison between the student and his/her host family and Host Rotary Club. It can be challenging to help arrange host parents and to deal with the needs of an active young student, but it can also fill your heart with joy.

The student must attend the mandatory Inbound Orientation in August (See Activities Page). The students are sent the “Rules” before coming here and we go over them in detail at the Inbound Orientation in September. We also discuss homesickness, and tips for adapting to the new culture. We emphasize zero tolerance for “the 6 D’s”: Dating, Drugs, Driving, Drinking, Downloading, and Decorating. The Orientation also covers issues of sexual harassment, school attendance, and host family responsibilities as well as the end of the year train trip and other events.

First and foremost, get to know your student. Establish a caring and friendly rapport. The Counselor communicate with the student at least twice a month or more especially at the time of arrival and when the student changes host families. An in-person visit is required at least once per month. A minimum of an hour should be planned for each visit, time perhaps for lunch or dinner, a long walk or other activity. Rotary club meetings are a great way to keep in touch! The student needs a trusted adult to lean on particularly in the first few weeks. A counselor is not in any way a therapist or professional adviser. Successful counselors make the student part of their life. Most Counselors begin a correspondence with their student even prior to his or her arrival. Student should let you and host family know of their flight itinerary as soon as it is confirmed.

Be available for your student, not just when there they are having difficulties. ALWAYS return phone calls promptly. Though very unlikely, it may be necessary to meet with your student, host parents or school representative on short notice. Establish preferred contact information with the student, host family, and school if needed.

Work with your Club YEO to arrange host families for your student if all of the hosts have not yet been selected. Most exchanges use 3 host families during the student's stay. Rotary requires at least 2 host families to spread the responsibility as well as the joy of hosting. In addition, living with several families gives the student a wider cultural experience and more opportunities. The second and following host families are easier to locate than the first family as the students often effectively sell themselves in your Rotary club and community. About half of the host families are not Rotarians. The safety and health of the student must always be foremost in selecting a host. It is imperative that all families are carefully interviewed and background checked.

Enroll your student in school and monitor school performance. Often, the student appreciates the question "How is school going?" Occasionally it will be necessary to help, or arrange special help, for your student in school. This is usually due to language problems. Consider the student’s fluency in English before enrolling him or her in a class such as history that requires a lot of reading and comprehension. You can have the school send you a copy of the student’s transcripts each quarter.

Arrange for your student to attend as many Rotary meetings and functions as possible. Rotary Youth Exchange is a cultural exchange and, though good grades are important, Rotary and cultural participation are also important. In most schools, with proper class scheduling and permission of the teacher, the student can attend occasional Rotary Club meetings. Your student should, of course, attend and participate in all club service activities and social events. Make sure your membership knows they are all part of the exchange and welcome them to invite your student into their homes, to family celebrations and community social events. If your Club has a website with e-mail Distribution, add your student as an honorary member for the year. The student must attend the Inbound Orientation, District Conference and RYLA. The District Youth Exchange Committee will help coordinate these meetings and transportation.

**Counselor Checklist**

*Before the student arrives:*

* Complete a volunteer application, which will involve reference checks and a background check, as required by State Department regulations. The volunteer application can be found on our website, <http://www.rye5495.org/> . After these checks are done you will be given access to the web portal, <http://yehub.net/SNX-portal>. There is a link to the web portal on our website.
* Correspond with the student before they depart from home.
* Contact the first (and all) hosting families to develop a relationship, coordinate/confirm school enrollment, provide any clarification and assistance regarding Rotary, rules, hosting questions, etc.
* Communicate with the host Rotary Cub to set up the monthly delivery of allowance.
* Confirm with host parents that they have a date to register the student for school and classes.
* Confirm who will pick student up at the airport. Send YEO E-mail confirmation when student arrives – YEO must submit arrival report so this confirmation is very important
* Check to make sure student has insurance. This is NOT standard family health insurance. It is special Cultural Exchange insurance. The Insurance enrollment information was sent to the student with their visa paperwork and is also available at: <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/rotary_entry.htm> Students must sign up for PLAN B that includes the Liability coverage – total cost is $1,099.00. Student should enroll on-line before departure

*After the student arrives:*

* Meet and welcome the student on behalf of the host club. (within ONE week of arrival) Join the host family at the airport if appropriate.
* Visit the student IN THEIR HOST HOME within the first 60 days of arrival. You are fulfilling a state department requirement with this visit to assure the student is being hosted in an appropriate manner. This visit must be documented thru the web portal as soon as it happens. Inbound students are allowed to share a bedroom with another child of the same gender within 5-year age difference, but they must have their own bed that is neither inflatable or foldable. If there are any other major concerns with the hosting situation after this visit please share them in the report. This visit must be repeated whenever the student moves to a new host family.
* Introduce the student to their host Rotary club. Set up a meeting for a banner exchange and introduction.
* Arrange for a Rotary meeting slide presentation by the student. Typically, this is done near the latter half of their year when their language skills are improved.
* Work to involve your student in Rotary functions, as appropriate all year long.
* Encourage members to take out the student to events, dinners, weekends away, etc. Remember, background checks MUST be done on all members who invite the student for an overnight or members (anyone over 18) who is in contact with the student on a regular basis. Consult the district Youth Protection Officer if you have any questions. All travel over night or out of state MUST be approved by the Inbound Chair ahead of time.
* Arrange for a student bank account for deposit of monthly allowance from host club. The $500 emergency fund will be collected at orientation. Students MAY need some guidance in managing their money.
* Cell phone: there is no cell phone policy. The student is required to pay for any charges associated unless the host parents wish to take on this expense. Work with both to decide what is best if a phone is necessary.
* The student must have access to a computer at the family home or school in order to send monthly reports. Confirm that monthly reports are going to you and to the Inbound Chair.
* International insurance was purchased before they left home... Confirm that they have a card and they carry it. Confirm that student and host parents know what to do to access insurance and understand the benefit. You should also have a copy of the card.
* Make two copies of all documents and student’s application. Documents include: visa, DS2019 or any other government issued documents, passport, insurance card, plane ticket confirmation/itinerary, and medical information if there is more than was provided in the application. \*Keep one copy of documents for yourself and provide the other set to the District Inbound chair at orientation.
* Attend Inbound Orientation.
* Plane ticket: NOTE: The students do not typically arrive with a confirmed return date! Help them make final departure reservations with the airline before December 25th. (Students will need to safeguard their passport and important papers. Ask them about where/how they are doing this.)
* Introduce student into their new school system. Answer questions. Confirm that the class schedule meets their academic requirements for home and the requirements for Rotary. (Must take 4 academic classes. Prefers student to be registered as a senior to walk through graduation if permissible by school officials. Students can take lower than senior classes but have the status of senior.)
* Make sure the student knows how to reach you at all times. Conversely, know how to reach your student at all times.
* Transition to new host families: Confirm with the Inbound Chair who the families are and when the moves are agreed to occur. Help the student and families manage the move/transition. Advise the Inbound Chair and the Rotary club when the student moves. Advise the school of the change as well. New paperwork may need to be filled out by the hosting family. YOU should be on the school emergency card giving you permission to take them from school if necessary.
* Be advised of any proposed travel and work with the Inbound Chair for all approvals in advance of travel. Some travel may require proper documentation and background checks as well as birth family approval.
* Summer Tour: Help coordinate the student’s sign up for the summer tour. This is something they do on their own (paperwork, payment, fundraising and preparation) Begin discussing this option early as deposits are typically due in November and fundraising should be complete by March for the final payment.
* Act as the principal advisor to the student – a third party for all issues. Keep in touch. NO less than a monthly meeting with your student away from their host family to discuss their situation. Make it fun. This is your opportunity to mentor and get to know this great student. Serve as their advocate.
* Every month while the student is here you are required to contact the student (in person, by phone, or by email) and file a monthly counselor report thru the web portal.
* Mediate any misunderstandings that may arise with respect to host families, school, or Rotary Club. Intervene as necessary to resolve problems, including changing your host family or returning you to your home country

**The Ideal Student Counselor Relationship**

The counselor has a very special job and is an important part of the student’s exchange year. Make SURE they always know how to get ahold of you!

Build a strong relationship with the student by:

* Involve them in your life and the work of your Rotary club.
* Help them solve problems with school
* Help them solve problems with their host family.
* Be an encouraging person to talk to when they are sad, lonely, sick or homesick.
* Be GLAD to hear about your successes and good times.
* Make sure they get your monthly allowance from your Rotary Club.
* Help them find solutions to BIG problems that they can’t handle.
* Stand by them if they get in trouble.
* Encourage them when you want to give up.
* Motivate them to do well in school.
* Remind them of the RULES so they don’t get sent home.
* Worry about their safety.
* Remind them and look forward to their monthly reports.
* Encourage other Rotarians to include them in their travels and fun times.

WANT to be their friend. Please get to know them and plan to spend time together each month.

**Local Coordinator Responsibilities, District 5495 Youth Exchange**

The first responsibility of a local coordinator is dictated by the State Department regulations, which you reviewed as part of your online local coordinator training. This includes knowing the relevant State Department regulations, and acting in accordance with those regulations. Local coordinators are primarily responsible for inbound students.

* You must visit the home of each prospective host family and file a report online.  
  Note: you do not have to take pictures as in the past. The host family will take the pictures, you will verify those pictures as part of the approval process for the host family. The home visit must be reported on the web portal: <http://yehub.net/SNX-portal>
* You must renew your State Department certification each year. We will remind you.

The home inspection visit must be done as part of the vetting process, before the family can know any details about the student. You can tell them we have a girl from Brazil named Leticia, for example, but really nothing beyond that. Only after they have been fully vetted (complete online application, background check, home visit, and reference check), then they can be given a copy of the student’s application.

The local coordinator is the person who ties everything together in a local area (school)

* Host families:  
  We ask the outbound students to help us find host families, but they are not always successful, and they may find host families in the wrong school district. We need someone in the local area to take responsibility for recruiting host families and encouraging Rotary clubs to help find host families. We need three families in the boundaries of the school the student will attend. (Sometimes families are willing to transport them to a certain school but at least one anchor family should live in the school boundaries.)
* Schools:  
  It is important to develop a relationship early with the schools we use in your area. We need to get commitments from the schools as early as possible each year, based on our projected exchanges.
* Clubs:  
  It is important to keep in touch with the clubs that sponsor outbounds and host inbounds in your area. We need financial commitments each year, based on our projected exchanges. But keep in mind that if a club is willing to host a student, we may find other clubs willing to cover the cost.
* Counselors:  
  Each inbound student must have a counselor (same gender as student is preferred). The counselor should be a member of the host club. The state department requires that someone other than the local coordinator visit the home shortly after the student moves in with them.

The next thing that is critically important to the program is to gather all the information required for the Guarantee Form. The information should be filled in on the computer BEFORE we print the Guarantee Form and get all the required signatures. We need the following information:

1. Host club
   1. Club name
   2. President (name, phone, and email)
   3. Secretary or club-level youth exchange officer (name, phone, and email)
2. Counselor (name, email, physical address, phone numbers)
3. School
   1. School Name
   2. School Start date
   3. Official who will sign the Guarantee Form (name and email)
4. First host family
   1. Names of Father & Mother

You may notice that this list is shorter than in the past. Much of the data is now in our database, or will be added from the host family application. You can send all that information in an email to [5495inbounds@gmail.com;5495outbounds@gmail.com](mailto:5495inbounds@gmail.com;5495outbounds@gmail.com) . I will complete the form and email the form to you so you can print three copies of it, then get all the required signatures. It is very important that this be done as soon as possible, but not later than the end of April. All the signatures must be in BLUE INK.

The remaining duty is to repeat the process of vetting each subsequent host family. They must be vetted BEFORE the student is moved. Move dates must be communicated to the Inbound Chair ahead of time so reports can be filed.

There may be other duties that we will ask you to do at various times, to help in your local area. As we learn how to work with the YEAH database we will keep you informed of what you need to do and how to do it.

In the future, we hope to get Local Coordinators involved with the interview process for prospective outbound students. The coordinator could meet the applicant early in the process, help them thru it, work with them to find potential host families, and connect them with a potential sponsoring club. All this should help smooth the process of getting ready for the new inbound students each spring.

**The goal is to have all three of the host families found, vetted and inspected before the student even arrives. They must be vetted BEFORE they have access to the student’s email/application, etc. If you are successful with this, having a pre-arrival meeting with all the host families and the counselor is the goal. At this mini-orientation, the people meet and form a “team” that will work with the student throughout the year.**

**You or the counselor must take the role of “calendar coordinator” to work with the families and decide when moves will happen or when families will “borrow” the student to participate in a family event or travel opportunity.**

**QUESTIONS should be directed to NORM SAMUELSON and KALEY GILMORE @** [5495inbounds@gmail.com;5495outbounds@gmail.com](mailto:5495inbounds@gmail.com;5495outbounds@gmail.com)

**CRISIS HOTLINES & CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES**

***These numbers are for emergencies only***

***For routine problems, call your local Rotary Contacts first***

**If you are experiencing a medical emergency, are in danger, or are feeling suicidal, call 911 immediately**

**24-Hour Sexual Assault & Rape Crisis Hotlines:**

**Nation-wide Abuse Victim hotline: Safe Horizons: 1.800.621.HOPE (4673)**

**Nation-wide Rape & Sexual Assault Hotline: 212.227.3000**

[**http://www.safehorizon.org/page/rape--sexual-assault-54.html?gclid=CMK05aSSoL8CFQiUfgod\_DQAWw**](http://www.safehorizon.org/page/rape--sexual-assault-54.html?gclid=CMK05aSSoL8CFQiUfgod_DQAWw)

**24 Hour Toll Free Rotary YES/SCANEX Emergency Contact Number: 800-5STJOHN**

**National Hotlines for other services:**

* National Drug & Alcohol Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP
* National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
* National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD
* National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-HIT-HOME
* National Adolescent Suicide Hotline: 1-800-621-4000
* Depression and Bipolar Support 800-273-TALK (8255), Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, <http://www.dbsalliance.org>
* National Runaway Hotline: 1-800-621-4000
* Panic Disorder Information Hotline: 1-800- 64-PANIC
* NEDA National Eating Disorders (800) 931-2237 <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/information-referral-helpline>
* National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline – loveisrespect (866) 331-9474 Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, ttp://www.loveisrespect.org

**YEAH DATABASE FAQ’s:**

**What is the link for Counselor and Volunteer Applications?**

<http://yehub.net/SNX-volapp> (case sensitive).

**What is the link for the Counselor/YEO Portal to submit reports?**

To access portal, go to <http://yehub.net/SNX-portal> use your login (email address) and password

**If I filled out a host application last year, do I need to fill out a new one?**

No, just go to <http://yehub.net/SNX-hfapp> make any needed updates– New pet? Child moved back in or moved out? New E-mail?

After TWO years, new references may be requested.

**Who is using the YEAH Database?**

Almost all Rotary Districts in the US are now using this database. Designer is an experienced Youth Exchange Officer in Florida who designs databases for a living. He has tailored the Database to meet the Rotary YE Certification and State Department compliance audit requirements.

**My References have not replied, what do I do?**

Make sure you entered the correct email address – this is the most common reason for no reply Tip: Contact the References and give them a heads-up to expect a link to the reference questionnaire.

**My Reference is not available to reply, can a choose a new one?**

Yes, email the YEO the new Reference’s Name, email address and phone number and we will substitute the new contact for the unavailable reference

**I’m a Counselor, how do I submit a host family change?**

**First make sure the new host family’s application has been FULLY approved.** Student cannot change families until new family is fully vetted. Use your Counselor portal to select the new family using the pull-down menu. Contact YEO if you’re having any problems.

**The new host family has filled out an application but it has not been approved yet. Can the student change families anyway?**

**No.** Host Family’s application must be fully approved in advance of student changing families. This means they completed the Host application including photos, their references have both responded, the background check have cleared and the home visit was completed and recorded in the database. Once approved, Host Family will receive a “Host Family application approved” email acknowledgement.

**I filled out a background check consent form last year, do I need to submit a new one each year?**

Yes. The background check consent forms are only valid for one year for host families and Volunteers. The State Department does allow a month or two leeway if the Background Check was completed but expired towards the end of the current exchange year.

**How do we get the inbound student’s itinerary?**

The District YEO sends the inbounds a link through the database to enter their entire itinerary. The system then sends the itinerary to the host family, counselor, YEO and Country Coordinator.