

GRSP
GEORGIA ROTARY
STUDENT PROGRAM

GUIDE FOR HOST FAMILIES

Thank you for serving as a host family to a Georgia Rotary Student Program Scholar!

Serving as a GRSP host family is one of the most rewarding experiences a Rotarian can have on their Rotary journey. GRSP brings Rotary's vision and mission to life, as it's about bringing real people together to make the world a better place. Inviting a student into your home, investing time with them, and "adopting" them into your family for a year can be life changing. Your GRSP student is here to go to college for a year and will spend most of their time on campus, but more importantly, is the cultural education they'll receive by being immersed in your family and community during the time that they spend with you. Your impact will benefit them for the rest of their lives. You and your family will be enriched by learning about them, their families, and their customs, culture and beliefs, as much as you will be by sharing your own. Having an international student in your home with your own children allows us to broaden the minds of the next generation two-fold.

Georgia Rotary Student Program has offered scholarships to students and provided them one year of study and a host family in Georgia since 1946. A lot has changed over the past 78 years. Attending college in the age of social media and in a post-Covid world has created a first-year experience unlike that which any of us have gone through before. The initial shock of leaving for college can be overwhelming for any first-year college students-especially students who are also in a new country and away from their family for the first time. As you can imagine, GRSP has encountered many challenges and opportunities when it comes to hosting students. This document is intended to share some of the knowledge gained over the past 78 years to make your hosting experience as enjoyable and rewarding as we know it can be.

Questions? Communicate with your GRSP Trustee and the GRSP Office

Key Responsibilities of a Host Family

- Provide a safe, welcoming, and comfortable environment
- Coordinate and schedule transportation for rotary meetings & events, and GRSP events.
- Facilitate student's integration into family, Rotary, and the community
- Support the student's academic, cultural, and personal development
- Follow all state and federal laws (especially as it pertains to alcohol, travel, driving, etc.)



Before Arrival

You've agreed to host a student and were just introduced to that student in an email from the Georgia Rotary Student Program Office. Now What?

Now it's time to write a Welcome email to: Introduce yourself and your family: Share information about each family member, including names, ages, interests, and hobbies. Include pets. Provide a brief description of your home and its surroundings, as well as highlights of your community, such as local attractions, parks, and schools. Briefly describe the weather in your area to help the student learn what to pack. Most importantly, convey your excitement and share your hopes for your time together.

Next, connect on social media and schedule a video call or meeting so you can "see" and hear each other.

Upon Arrival

Once your student arrives, it is time to make them a part of your family. Start with a house tour to help them become familiar with their new environment.

Plan to take the student on a shopping trip after arrival to get items for their dorm, such as paper products, school supplies etc. Some students buy a pay-as-you-go cell phone for local calls/texts; others bring their home cell phones and may need a new SIM card. For long distance and international calls most students use WhatsApp, Facetime, or Zoom.

Set expectations early. Your GRSP Student should have the same privileges and duties as your own children — and that includes chores. Your home is not a hotel — it is their home. You are a parent, not an employee or boss. It is helpful to clearly explain expectations about household responsibilities and routines from the onset of the experience and to apply them to hosted participants as you would with any siblings of a similar age. By this, we mean that the same rules and expectations about chores, curfews, mealtimes, etc., apply to your GRSP Student as to other family members. Welcome them to Rotary and your community. Just remember that, when your student first arrives, jet lag may affect them. Physical and Mental fatigue is normal. However, the impact of travel and cultural fatigue can be minimized by getting extra sleep and rest. Do not make the mistake of over-scheduling your GRSP student's time in the first few weeks that they are here. You have plenty of time for fun!

Set Clear Expectations early and clearly

Explain any other household rules or expectations that have not been covered (ex: importance of being on time, cleanliness, expected bedtimes and household noise levels, rules around visits with friends, dating while in your care, internet and phone usage, appropriate clothing for various events, etc.). Explain mealtime and snacking expectations. Cultural norms about portions sizes, frequency/size of meals, and mealtime traditions vary widely across cultures and families. Many teenagers (especially boys) eat a lot. Be sure to communicate to your hosted participant which foods qualify as "snacks," (i.e. cereal, fruit, or toast) and which food you

HOME BASE

After providing a tour of your home/property, explain your family's expectations regarding "open" and "closed" doors (i.e., which rooms, when, why etc.). Explain which rooms the student MAY or MAY NOT enter and the reason(s) why/why not. Explain which appliances they MAY, or MAY NOT use, and be sure to demonstrate the correct, safe way to use household fixtures and appliances (i.e., microwave, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, toilet, shower, etc.) that they may use.

are keeping or saving for meals and/or cooking.

Clarify which chores the student is expected to do when staying with you and how often (ex: tidy bedroom, make bed, do their own laundry and hang up clean clothes, etc.).

Address any common weather events that they should be aware of (ex. earthquakes, tornados, floods, fires, droughts, snowstorms, etc.) Does the host family have an emergency preparedness plan? If yes: What is the emergency preparedness plan/emergency procedures for weather events?

Explain what the holiday season and special dates (birthdays, anniversaries, dates of actual holiday celebrations, etc.) means to your family, or doesn't mean, so they understand what to expect and find ways to incorporate your student's traditions in with your family. Provide specific dates if available. Decide with your student about what the year is going to look like; what you want to do together, things you'd like to share and talk about, etc.

In the beginning of the GRSP year, students may rely more heavily on you for their social connections, as they may not have formed genuine bonds with new friends just yet. Students could struggle with integrating into a social group at school or building friendships in a new culture. But once they create solid friendships, they might spend more time with their friends and less time at home.

Communication is key to helping them strike a balance with their time. Share expectations of which family, Rotary Club, and GRSP activities they should prioritize. Students may also receive invitations from other students and Rotarians throughout the year. Encourage them to respond in a timely manner to all communications and show appreciation/ gratitude.

Also communicate expectations of academic priorities such as attending class and maintaining good grades.

Communicate Clearly

Please keep in mind that the student's English 'fluency' (i.e. speaking ability) may be different than their English 'proficiency' (i.e. grammar and vocabulary knowledge, reading ability).

Tremendous concentration and effort are needed of a person with non-native language ability to grasp even simple conversations. Inability to convey basic needs, feelings, or ideas is frustrating and tiring. Host parents should speak clearly and slowly, repeat themselves if it's something important, and write down all answers. Avoid slang ("piece of cake", "full as a tick", "bless your heart") or explain the phrases as you use them.

Check for understanding – ask them to re-state your message in their own words. Ask one question at a time – and listen to the answer before asking your next question. If something is very important, write it down and put it in a common area for the student to visit.

Also, be sure to cover:

- How you communicate/show that something is bothering you/concerning you
- How you show respect in your culture
- How show appreciation in your culture
- Explain to your student that it's okay to ask if they feel unsure or confused.

Most importantly: Be patient and give additional time to listen, process and respond.

Since your student will spend the majority of their time on their college campus, you should communicate with them at a minimum once each week. You should determine how and when you will handle your weekly conversations.



During these conversations, be sure to listen when they reach out to you (but don't offer solutions until they ask). Always remind them that you're proud of them and trust them to make these decisions independently. Empathize with them. Share an example of a similar problem you faced and how you resolved it. Be sure to remind them that mistakes are powerful tools for learning, growing, and building their resilience. Expect them to struggle in the beginning. They may be away from home for the first time and are figuring out a new routine and schedule. These things are challenging on someone's best day, let alone their first time living away from home.

Encourage them to attend on-campus events and participate in campus-wide traditions. Remind students that it's okay to say no when their plate is already full. Emphasize the importance of building in down time in their day for a balanced, healthy college experience.



Uplifting practices

Encourage your student to spend time in the communal areas of your home, not only in their bedroom. Get your student out and about –go for walks, bike rides, to the grocery store, to the library to get a library card, go sight-seeing, volunteer, etc. Cook together! Let your student share their favorite recipes and make them together. Play simple card or board games (Charades, puzzles). Watch TV or family-friendly movies in English (with the English closed-captioning turned on) Encourage students to talk about life back home (but discourage excessive emails and phone calls home). Help them find something to occupy their time that is like something they enjoy at home. Make sure they establish good sleeping habits. They should not oversleep or sleep too little. Encourage physical exercise, as this releases endorphins and can help boost your student's mood.

Transportation

Transportation is often an area where conflict can arise. Establish how much advanced notice is needed to request rides to activities (ex: a few days, a week, a few hours) and what the family expectations are about providing transportation. For example, your student might ride with you, get a ride with a family friend or another student, or take the bus/Uber/Lift/Taxi/Marta. Host families are strongly discouraged from loaning their cars to their students.

Holidays and Traditions

Take some time to discuss with your GRSP Student what all the holiday seasons (or even sports seasons) mean to your family, or don't mean, so they understand what to expect.

Discuss your participant's perception of the holidays/traditions and how that may differ from your family's expectations. Is there an activity your student is really looking forward to? Invite them to compare your traditions with their major home country- find similarities and differences, what values are reflected in each? Look into ways that you share traditions with the school and community. If your student celebrates different holidays in their home country, or celebrates the same holidays in different ways, can y o u find a way to incorporate their traditions in with your family, school, and community? Create a calendar together that includes all the fun activities around your family's holidays and traditions and then ask your student to include their holidays and traditions too. Incorporating your student into your routine is a great way to make them feel part of the family.