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**Host Family Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What are my responsibilities as a Host Parent?**

Your primary responsibility is to welcome the Youth Ambassador into your home and treat him/her as one of your own children for the eight-week period. In addition to that basic premise, Host Parents also agree to do the following:

1. Provide personal space for the YA to sleep and live
2. Provide three meals per day and a first ‘call’ home upon arrival
3. Offer emotional support adjusting to the new family and culture
4. Offer assistance in scheduling two presentations about the youth ambassador’s life, school and state to community or school groups
5. Assist the Youth Ambassador with scheduling and adjustment to school
6. Attend the Partners Feijoada social event with the Youth Ambassador
7. Complete the follow up survey and provide ideas for the program
8. **Must I be a parent of a high school student to host a Partners Youth Ambassador?**

No, families do not have to have teenagers to be eligible; however, hosting often works best in families with high school students who are able to help Youth Ambassadors navigate the school environment, assist with getting to know peers, and facilitate transportation to and from extracurricular and social activities.

1. **What if our family doesn’t have an extra bedroom?**

Youth Ambassadors may share a bedroom with a same-gender child if separate beds are available. Providing some place or opportunity for privacy at some times during the day is recommended.

1. **Do I need to provide lunch money for my Youth Ambassador?**

Just as they would provide a meal for their own children at lunchtime, host families provide all meals for their youth ambassadors. At lunchtime, this may take the form of weekly lunch money or a sack lunch, according to the practices of other children in the family.

1. **Do I need to provide spending money for my Youth Ambassador?**

Youth Ambassadors bring their own spending money with them for personal expenses. Restaurant meals or admission fees during family outings should be covered by the host family, as they would be for their own children.

1. **Do I have to provide long distance telephone calls for the Youth Ambassador?**

This seems like an out of date question, but it is important to Indiana Partners that the host family provide an initial telephone call home for the Youth Ambassador to confirm to his/her Brazilian family that he or she has arrived safely and checked in with the host family. This may be accomplished at no expense through an internet Skype or Facetime call, but it is important that it happen. Additional calls are the financial responsibility of the Youth Ambassador.

1. **Does my family need to have Internet access?**

No, students do not require internet access on a daily basis. However, if not, Internet-use and mobile devices are so pervasive – often used for classroom assignments – the family should be prepared to be creative by using school computers or public libraries, where a student is required to blog or use the Internet for a school project.

1. **We only have one bathroom. Is that a problem?**

Partners Youth Ambassadors apply to come to the United States to experience life as a real American teenager. If your family uses only one bathroom, that will be an authentic part of family life for the Brazilian Youth Ambassador. Be sure to discuss your family’s procedures and routines for bathroom use with your Youth Ambassador soon after arrival, so bathroom scheduling will run smoothly for all.

1. **How do I find out if our school will accept an exchange student?**

First, consider talking with your school’s guidance counselor and principal, with or without a Partners representative, before applying to be a Host Parent in the spring for the following year. They will want to know how strong the selection and orientation process is to ensure they won’t need to provide often scarce language and other services required for new foreign speaking students. They will also want to ensure a reliable, responsible Host Parent and organization will back up the Youth Ambassador and ensure against disruption of school schedules and activities. If they want to know of other schools that have hosted Partners Youth Ambassadors, the Indiana Partners Youth Ambassador Committee can provide that.

If your school is reluctant to host, there may be other schools in your area that are willing to host a Partners Youth Ambassador, so they can be considered as well. Contact Partners for additional information.

1. **What if we don’t’ speak Portuguese or any foreign language?**

No problem. The Brazilian students accepted as Youth Ambassadors have had years of English language study and are eager to practice speaking English. Improving their English is one of their main goals for participating. Youth Ambassadors are carefully selected through written application, interviews and inter-active weekend evaluation to ensure they have the proper attitude for cultural learning, objectives for leadership and volunteering, and strong language skills. If you find yourself being misunderstood, you can try using simple language and speaking slowly for clarity and time to understand accent and cultural differences. Multi-lingual Youth Ambassador Committee members are also available to help.

1. **What if we don’t belong to any clubs or organizations for the Youth Ambassador to speak to?**

Consider asking relatives, neighbors, and friends for connections they may have, such as church groups and service clubs. You could also talk with teachers who may be willing to host presentations in their classrooms during school.

1. **Do I need to include the Youth Ambassador on my health insurance?**

No. Youth Ambassadors come to the United States with their own health insurance. If he or she becomes ill, you will need to seek medical attention just as you would for your own child, and the health insurance will provide coverage for that. You do need to be sure to access it properly and report any incidents to the insurance company. Partners can help with this.

1. **What about driving?**

Youth Ambassadors are not permitted to drive while they are in the United States. They do not receive their licenses in Brazil until they are older, so it is expected that they will not drive. Host Parents should use discretion about allowing a Youth Ambassador to ride with other students, as parents are responsible for the safety of the visiting Youth Ambassador.

1. **If we plan a vacation during this time, can the Youth Ambassador come with us?**

Probably. Inform the Youth Ambassador coordinator before the group arrives or as soon as possible when known, so Brazilian parents can be informed and consent given. Fill out the Overnight, Out of State Travel Request form (on the Partners website) at least two weeks in advance and submit to the Youth Ambassador coordinator.

1. **Will the Partners Program typically provide any activities or travel for the Youth Ambassador during the hosting period?**

Yes. In addition to the Partners Brazilian Feijoada dinner on one weekend, the Partners Youth Ambassador coordinator will usually organize a trip to Chicago for the group. This is usually at the end of the first month and serves as a retreat for the Youth Ambassadors to get back together, share their experiences, and talk with Partners committee members with international exchange experience about their adjustment.

1. **What will I do if my Youth Ambassador was hurt or had a problem I could not handle?**

Treating your Youth Ambassador as you would your own child is the key to handling most situations. If the Youth Ambassador were hurt, you would seek medical attention and inform the program coordinator. The Partners coordinator in Indiana and in Rio Grande do Sul will be directly in touch with the Youth Ambassadors, particularly in the beginning to monitor and assist with adjustment to a new and unfamiliar family life and school. If the Youth Ambassador has emotional problems or other situations, the parents feel they cannot handle, the coordinators will step in and ensure that the teen has assistance in his/her native language as well.

1. **We would like to host a Youth Ambassador, but we just don’t have the time to entertain a guest right now. Is there another time or way to host?**

Remember that Youth Ambassadors are in Indiana to experience everyday life in an American family. They should not be considered guests, but treated as family members. Youth Ambassadors should have some household responsibilities, similar to all other family members and not expect to be entertained and taken on special tourism excursions constantly. If you cannot host but want to be involved in other ways, check opportunities on the Indiana Partners website and consider getting better acquainted for hosting the next year.

1. **What if our budget does not provide extra money for special trips?**

Be creative. Host families are not expected to provide travel experiences for their Youth Ambassadors, and the winter months of the program do not lend themselves well to this anyway. Consider places in or near your community that would be of special interest to teens from Brazil, such as a small museum or state park, a farm. A visit to grandparents or other relatives nearby can be lots of fun and offer interesting experiences about family history and customs. Inexpensive activities, like bowling, movie parties, game nights, and school sporting events in your own or nearby communities can all be fun for students. The Brazilian teens, like American teens, will want to know and go out with other teens. Also, it can be fun to work network with the other Partners Host Parents to piggyback on outings they may be taking or organizing.