

## MARCH SUPPORT TIPS

In YFU time, March tends to be one of the slower months of the support year. We hope this means March will be a smooth month for host families, students and our Local Coordinators; making all eager to share their YFU Story with friends, family, and neighbors.

We hope these timely tips will provide you with the materials necessary to have comfortable and meaningful conversations during your monthly meetings. As always, thank you for the work you do, YFU could not exist without Local Coordinators!

### SUPPORT TIPS

#### SPRING BREAK!

Spring break is sometimes viewed as a week of partying and questionable activities. YFU wants students to enjoy their spring breaks; however, Local Coordinators can also remind students that their actions have consequences. Students need to decide whether their actions are a good representation of themselves, their home country, their natural family, YFU, and the host family. It would be tragic to have problems and possibly early return at this point in the exchange. Local Coordinators can remind students that a verified use of drugs and/or alcohol by a student places them on Probationary status. If a student is already on Probation and is found to be partying, that student's YFU program will be ended.

#### TRAVEL WITH HOST FAMILY

Many students and host families travel together in March. Local Coordinators should familiarize themselves with YFU's Permission to Travel Policy. Many types of travel must be approved by YFU before the student and family purchase tickets. Host families can complete the Permission to Travel form online, in their host family account.

International Travel is popular during spring break. This is allowed; however, there are extra steps required before the student and host family can embark on their trip. Local Coordinators should remind students and host families that they must submit their request for international travel at least **4 weeks** prior to their trip. Students must gain an "authorized signature" on their DS-2019 before departing for the trip – this signature allows the student to re-enter the US. If Local Coordinators have questions about on-program travel, they should contact their Support Services Manager.

#### NATURAL FAMILY VISITS

YFU strongly discourages natural family visits during the program year. However, YFU is typically ok with natural families visiting the student at the end of the exchange. In March and April, some natural families begin making requests to visit their students at the end of the year. Local Coordinators should direct any such requests to the Support Services Manager; as YFU USA and the sending country must approve all natural family visits.

Host families are not obligated to "host" natural Families (however, a host family *can* if they want to). The generally recommended method of visiting is for natural parents to arrive at the end of the student's exchange, pick up the student from the host family's home, and travel / visit the US together.

#### GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY (In April)

Global Youth Service Day is an annual event observed over the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last weekend in April; a celebration of young volunteers around the world. This is an excellent opportunity for YFU students to volunteer in their community and focus on civic action. Local Coordinators should let their students know that this is coming up and encourage students to be active in their communities. If an LC is repping a scholarship student (CBYX, YES, and/or FLEX) this is an excellent weekend for the student to focus on the community service hours they are required to complete for their scholarship.

#### SCHEDULE YOUR LAST FEW CONTACTS NOW

March is upon us; leading to the many activities of spring such as spring break, prom, and other end-of-the-year events. YFU recommends that Local Coordinators schedule their last remaining monthly contacts now so that you are not trying to reach folks at the last minute later.

## RETURN TRAVEL INFO

Most students should be aware of their return date by March. Some students are eligible to change their return date utilizing a CDR or “Change of Departure Request” (see below). Students from Japan and students on the CBYX, FLEX, and YES scholarships are not permitted to change their return date (per their sending offices and Department of State). Non-CBYX students from Germany must go through YFU Germany to change their return travel.

YFU USA’s travel department sends emails to students and host families containing the student’s return date around this time of year. Travel can be reached at [travel@yfu.org](mailto:travel@yfu.org). Students will receive their complete domestic and international return travel itineraries in a reconfirmation letter approximately 3 weeks before their departure; along with their confirmation number for check in. Students’ current itineraries are “reservations” in the airline’s system and may be subject to change when airlines update their schedules in the spring.

YFU USA has staff in 7 airports across the US and in Frankfurt, Germany. Most YFU students travel in groups, with other students. YFU’s travel emergency line is 1-800-705-9510 or 202-774-5200; to be used while students are traveling if their flight is delayed or changed. These numbers are monitored 24/7.

## CHANGE OF DEPARTURE REQUEST (CDR)

All students should have received an email from YFU’s travel department; noting their return date and instructions for completing a “Change of Departure Request” if they would like to change their return date. If your student and host family have not received this information, please contact [travel@yfu.org](mailto:travel@yfu.org). Please note: Japanese students and students on the FLEX, YES, and CBYX scholarships are not eligible to change their departure date.

CDR Requests should be submitted to YFU USA travel. YFU USA’s travel dept will consult with the sending YFU office to make sure the student’s natural parents agree before the request is approved. The host family must also agree to the change. The deadline to submit a Change of Departure Request to YFU travel is April 1<sup>st</sup>. There is a \$250 fee for processing a CDR; YFU travel will collect the fee from the student’s natural parents via the sending YFU office.

## THANK YOU!

You are YFU’s eyes and ears on the ground. YFU’s Local Coordinators across the country are the first contact and sometimes the only YFU representatives to have direct contact with the students and host families on program. This is a great honor and a great responsibility. We thank you for accepting this responsibility and helping YFU support healthy and successful exchanges each year.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

### FOR STUDENTS

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#### What are your plans for Spring Break?

Local Coordinators should remind students that there are guidelines they must follow before deciding to go anywhere, even if it is with their host family. Local Coordinators should familiarize themselves with YFU’s Permission to Travel Policy and make sure the student and host family understand what is and is not allowed by YFU. If a student and host family plan to travel internationally, LC should remind them that it takes a few weeks to process an international travel request. See “Travel with Host Family” section above for more info.

**When are you scheduled to return home? Have you discussed your departure date and any additional plans with your host family & natural family? (If student / host family indicates they wish to change the return date, LCs should ask if they have submitted their Change of Departure Request paperwork).**

Encourage the student to make sure to read their travel letter thoroughly. If your student did not receive their travel letter, it may be requested from [travel@yfu.org](mailto:travel@yfu.org). LCs should keep in mind that not all students are permitted to change their return date; if LCs have questions re: return dates and the CDR process, they can check in with YFU’s travel department or their Support Services Manager (SSM). For students that can change their return date, LCs should remind them that the deadline is April 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Does your natural family plan on visiting you in the US?

If a student's natural family is considering visiting the student before the end of their program, Local Coordinators should remind the student that YFU strongly discourages this. YFU recommends that natural families visit the student at the end of their exchange. Students are not permitted to miss school for a natural family visit. Visits from the natural family during the year can cause significant adjustment issues and both YFU offices (YFU USA and the sending YFU office) must approve the visit. If a student's natural family plans to come at the end of the exchange, the Local Coordinator should gather as much information as possible from the student and share it with the Community Manager and Support Services Manager.

## Is there anything you wish to do / eat / try while you are on exchange? Do you have any goals for the remainder of your exchange?

It can be helpful to remind students that they only have a few months left of their exchange. Some students will have goals they have not accomplished yet and the rest of the year can "fly by" for the students and host family! It is helpful to discuss with students how they think things have gone thus far and how they plan to end their exchange on a positive note. Local Coordinators should also begin discussing with students how they can show their gratitude to their host family and their American school before they depart.

## FOR FAMILIES

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### Does your family and/or student have any spring break plans? Does it involve traveling?

Spring Break is an exciting time for high school students, but for parents it can be a challenge to ensure that students are safe and making good choices. YFU students are expected to follow the host family's rules and refrain from drinking and /or using drugs. A verified use of alcohol or drugs by a student is automatic Probationary status. LCs should notify their Support Services Manager if this occurs; the student will receive a Probation Letter and their natural parents will be notified (via the partner country).

In March, many students will travel with their host families and some students travel on BELO trips. The LC should try to schedule their March monthly contact at the beginning of the month to avoid missing the student and host family while they are traveling.

### Do you know your student's departure date yet? Are there any other "summer plans" you think YFU should be aware of?

Host families should have received the email with their student's departure date. If they have not, it can be requested again from [travel@yfu.org](mailto:travel@yfu.org). If a host family reports they cannot host into June, YFU and the LC will need to find another host family until the student's departure date (most students depart in mid to late June). YFU is obligated to provide a fully vetted host family until the end of the student's program. A good starting place if a temporary family is needed at the end of the year is the student's social circle / American friends. If this situation comes up with one of your host families, please alert your Community Manager.

Natural families sometimes visit at the end of the year and "pick the student up" from the host family home before traveling with their son or daughter. This is ok, as long as both YFU offices are notified and the student departs the US within 30 days of their visa expiration date.

### Is there anything you would like to ask me or any pending issues you would like to discuss?

Giving host families the opportunity to discuss questions or concerns they have will hopefully alleviate any pending issues that may otherwise come up later. Now is a good time to address these issues so that the exchange ends on a positive note. Local Coordinators should keep in mind that families may be asked to host again (or you may already be asking them!) – it is helpful to resolve a family's concerns as soon as possible so that they feel supported.

### Does your student have any outstanding medical bills that need attention?

It is much easier to resolve medical bills while the student is still in the US; thus, YFU asks that Local Coordinators ask this question a few times before the student returns home. All students are covered by an insurance policy; anything the insurance policy does not cover is the responsibility of the student and natural parents – not the host family. If the student and host family need assistance in resolving a medical bill, LCs should contact their Support Services Manager and share: the date of service, reason for medical visit, copy (or copies) of the bill, and the insurance's response thus far.

If you have any questions about Monthly Contacts, please contact your Community Manager!