

Protecting YFU Communities

YFU is committed to being a watchful community, making sure all exchange students are safe in their host homes and communities. All members of the YFU community support and protect one another and take action as needed.

Below is important information on providing a secure and safe environment. Consider the following suggestions, warning signs and action plan so that you, as a host parent, will be more equipped to protect your exchange student and self.

For help or to report

1.866.493.8872

After hours

1.800.424.3691

Avoid Misunderstandings

Reduce the number of misunderstandings by sitting down as a family to talk about boundaries. Help YFU provide a carefree and secure environment for yourself and your exchange student:

- ❖ **Set Clear Family Boundaries:** Talk about appropriate behavior, physical interactions and relationships between an exchange student and host family members. For example, a romantic or sexual relationship with a sibling would be inappropriate.
- ❖ **Don't Keep Secrets:** Talk to your exchange student about the American culture of openness. Let them know, secrets in the family are not appropriate and that you, as a host parent, want to hear about their experiences – good and bad. Furthermore, it can be harmful to keep secrets, particularly ones that make them feel uncomfortable.
- ❖ **Show Respect:** Many exchange students come from cultures in which affection is displayed differently. Be cognizant of and respect your student's discomfort with physical contact.
- ❖ **Provide and Establish Expectations Regarding Privacy:** Adjusting to new surroundings, new rules, and new people can be overwhelming at times. Having a private space is important for exchange students. Respect the privacy of students in their bedroom and bathroom.
- ❖ **Students 18yrs Old:** If your exchange student is or will be 18 years old while in the United States, being familiar with US laws is important. Engaging in sexual activity with someone who has not reached the age of consent is illegal, even if consensual, refer to: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/o8/sr/statelaws/summary.shtml>.

Recognize Warning Signs of Abuse

By recognizing behaviors that pave the way to abuse, we can prevent harm before it happens!

- ❖ **Excessive communication:** adults spending excessive time e-mailing, texting or calling an exchange student can be a warning sign.
- ❖ **Special Relationship:** spending uninterrupted and/or extended time alone with an exchange student or giving gifts or money for no reason may be warning signs.
- ❖ **Special Permissions:** allowing an exchange student to break YFU or family rules. When an adult has secrets with an exchange student it may be a warning sign.
- ❖ **Denying Privacy:** walking into the bathroom or bedroom when an exchange student is there. Additionally, inviting or allowing the exchange student to enter an adult's bedroom or bathroom can be a warning sign.
- ❖ **Inappropriate Sharing:** turning to an exchange student for emotional or physical comfort by sharing personal or private information that would normally be shared with another adult is a warning sign.

Take Action

The responsibility of keeping exchange students safe belongs to every adult in the community. Every adult in the YFU community must listen, support and report.

- ❖ **Listen to your Gut:** Despite there being no accusations, there may be a time when you sense something is headed in the wrong direction. Talk with your Area Rep or Support Services Manager as soon as you have a concern. That allows a trained professional to assess the situation.
- ❖ **Listen and Don't Judge:** Listen to your exchange student. If a YFU student feels uncomfortable, the feeling is real. In order to protect yourself and your exchange student you must report to your Area Rep or Support Services Manager any accusation or concern.
- ❖ **Support and Report:** It is not your job to determine the truth or confront the alleged abuser. Your role is to inform your Area Representative or Support Services Manager of the student's report. Doing nothing to stop wrongdoing is an endorsement of wrongdoing.
- ❖ **Report to YFU:** Contact your Area Rep and then your Support Services Manager at **1.866.4.YFU.USA** (1.866.493.8872). For events that occur outside of work hours, call the YFU emergency hotline at **1.800.424.3691**. If you are a mandatory reporter based on your profession, follow the requirements for that profession as well as reporting to YFU.

EXTRA RESOURCES

- **Stop it Now!:** Receive Free and Confidential Guidance on any issues or concerns you have. Contact www.stopitnow.org through the Hotline 1-888-PREVENT or e-mail them at <http://www.stopitnow.org/help-inquiry>
- **Let's Talk:** If you are concerned about your own thoughts and feelings towards children, help is available. www.StopItNow.org/guidebooks; <http://GetHelp.StopItNow.org>.
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:** www.missingkids.com, or for their Hotline call 1-800-843-5678.