

**Guidelines for Families hosting IPEP participants**

One of the most important features of any CIF exchange program is Host Family Living. Host families provide a home base and home comforts, so that alongside the learning the IPEP participant can experience culture, social exchange, relaxation, friendship and fun!

These guidelines have been developed for host families, to provide a general guide when hosting a participant in a CIF IPEP.

It is acknowledged that each national branch will have priorities and preferences that relate to their own country. It is their responsibility to clarify such issues relating to their own IPEP and adapt the guidelines accordingly.

**National branch responsibilities**

The national branch establishes a committee which is delegated and accountable for preparing, leading and evaluating an IPEP. Usually one of this committee member’s tasks is to find, inform and keep in touch with host families.

It is also the committee’s responsibility to share

* contact telephone numbers of program coordinators and/or national branch committee members which should be made available to host families in case any issues arise during the program,
* the program timetable with host families, as it is likely that program arrangements will not be the same every day. For example, participants may not need to leave or return to the house at the same time as their hosts leave for and return from their work.
* a contact list of host families where each participant is placed, which is helpful to promote communication and provide opportunities for host families to arrange transport when a participant moves to live with another host family.

**In advance of the participant’s arrival**

* IPEP participants receive specific information about their program, accommodation, and their host families from the local CIF Program Coordinator. This includes some general information about issues such as local costs, the weather and recommended clothing and footwear.
* Host families are encouraged to contact the participant before they travel, to let them know about their family and lifestyle and to answer any questions.

**Accommodation**

* The length of the stay of a participant with a host family is agreed upon beforehand by the branch and the host family.
* Participants should have a bedroom to themselves and whenever possible be given a house key so that they can come and go in their own time.
* Host families must expect to explain how to use household appliances and equipment such as cookers and showers.

**Meals**

* Host families are asked to provide breakfast and an evening meal, and it is important to check whether the participant has any food allergies, restrictions or strong likes and dislikes.
* There may be some days when the participant or host family will make other meal arrangements. Most of the time, participants will be out of the house on placement during the day. They are responsible for getting their own lunch. They may choose to take a packed lunch, in which case the host family can discuss how and where the participant can buy food and prepare this in advance as required.
* It is acceptable to ask the participant to assist with meal preparation and cleaning up. Some participants may wish to prepare special food for themselves.

 **Family life**

* Family life should continue as normal. Host families should be sensitive and open to differences in cultures. It is important to make sure to check that the host family as well as the participant fully understand what is being said to each other, to avoid misunderstanding. English is not the main language in many CIF countries.
* Participants, as well as host families, need “space” to be themselves. Participants follow a very demanding schedule, are often speaking a foreign language, and are in the process of adapting to new cultural experiences.
* Host families are not expected to “entertain” or to make special arrangements for participants. However, it would be helpful if they could include their participant in any family or social occasions that may already be arranged.
* It is important to have a free exchange of ideas and discussion about respective cultures and customs in different countries. It may be appreciated by the participant to be encouraged to talk about his/her experiences of the day, as hosts may help them put these in context.

 **Religion and cultural differences**

* Host families should be aware that participants may or may not hold strong religious beliefs. Participants should be supported to continue their religious practices where possible. They may also enjoy the opportunity to be introduced to other religions, so mutual agreement should be established.
* An awareness of and respect for others’ cultural behaviours and religious customs is essential in order to fully understand and respond appropriately to participants’ needs.

 **Animals**

Some participants may not be used to having house pets, such as dogs and cats, living as part of the family.

 **Practical details, public transport**

* Household utilities, laundry arrangements, safety regulations in towns and other practical aspects of life might need to be explained.
* Participants are expected to use the public transport system and might need advice.

**Telephone / internet**

* Most participants will have their own mobile phone, but it would be helpful if they could use the host family’s house phone, in particular for town/country calls if necessary. Participants are expected to pay for international calls they make.
* It is important for all to note that some host families will not have home computers, or access to the internet may be limited or not available at all.
* Some participants may bring their own laptops/notebooks and have the ability to access the internet via a wireless connection. Host families may also provide opportunities for participants to use their home computers or related equipment. A mutual agreement should then be reached about times and duration of using these.

 **Smoking**

* Host families and participants should reach agreement, in advance of participants’ arrival, about smoking: for example, whether smoking is permitted within the house.
* Participants should also be made aware whether any host family members smoke within the house.

 **Insurance**

* National branches have a responsibility to review the participant’s health insurance documents.
* Host families should liaise with the branch Program Coordinator to support participants in cases where they require medical attention, or in the event of any other issue potentially involving insurance issues.