

Summary: *International Basic Standards for Educational Exchanges of Youth For Understanding*

The summary that follows was prepared by YFU Switzerland Chair Urs Beeli in the fall of 2004. It is intended for use as an overview and introduction of the full *International Basic Standards for Educational Exchanges of Youth For Understanding*. It is not meant to be used as a substitute for or a replacement of, the complete publication. All National Organizations are strongly encouraged to study, follow and annually audit their compliance with the full set of guidelines. Copies of the full guidelines may be obtained from the International Secretariat:

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Download from website: www.yfuies.org (follow the "publications" link)

International Basic Standards for Educational Exchanges of Youth For Understanding

Changes incorporated in 1989, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2002 and 2004

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

This section describes how the International Basic Standards were created and that their background is the commitment to high quality programs.

THE EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING AS THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTEXT FOR STANDARDS

YFU's mission is to prepare young people for their responsibilities and opportunities in a changing, interdependent world.

A "better world" we must define as one in which:

- differences of culture, ethnicity, ideology, values, gender, race, religion, language, and personality are appreciated and accepted, not ridiculed or rejected;
- skills of working cooperatively across boundaries of groups and cultures are developed, so that problem-solving strategies on an understanding of all the various cultural patterns, value systems, approaches, group interests and objectives involved can be developed;
- individuals exercise knowledgeable, responsible choice in the interest of the greater good;
- attitudes of internationalism and cross-cultural friendship guide individual decisions and behaviors;
- a commitment to solve problems through a dynamic, mutually respectful process of consensus is the norm.

[Additional text describes that exchange gives insight into another culture, that the family is central to the exchange, that exchange allows learning, that this however can bring difficulties and identifies the need for support].

BASIC STANDARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES

The International Basic Standards must be applied to:

- I promotion,
- II recruitment and selection,
- III host family selection and placement,
- IV orientation,
- V participant support/counseling,
- VI ongoing program involvement, and
- VII structural and operational issues.

I. PROMOTION

A. Identity

Promotional material must emphasize the educational objectives and the mission.

B. Responsibility

The programs must be described accurately and honestly.

C. Expectations

Promotional material must clearly state what participants can expect (program content, activities, and services). The material also specifies what is expected of YFU participants (policy, behavior). *Details of note:* qualifications required of participants; the selection process; orientations; support provisions; administrative features (travel, insurance, pricing).

D. Ethics

Advertising for host families, must not be published on very short notice, appeal to guilt or pity, imply that a student cannot come if no family is found and may not include pictures of the student or personal data unless the student has given written permission.

II. STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

As an educational organization, YFU has a responsibility for the quality of its programs and the well-being of participating students as well as participating host families. It must therefore apply an element of selectivity to the recruitment of participants.

A. Outbound Student Selection Qualifications

1. **Health:** All YFU students must be in good health.
2. **Age:** Between 15 and 18 years for high school programs. Specific age limits for special programs by mutual agreement.
3. **School performance:** Good school record. Language ability is an advantage (or maybe even a requirement).

B. Student Selection Procedure

1. All potential participants must be interviewed face-to-face. Interviewer must have specific experience and/or specific training for interviews. She or he is responsible to the national YFU organization.
2. Potential benefits and risks for the student will be considered during the interview.
3. Comparable standards in student selection should be used.
4. The interview is documented in a written report that is complementary to the student's self-description.
5. Interests, abilities and needs should be assessed.
6. Assessing risk factors is an important way to prevent potential major problems.
7. Factors that influence placement should be assessed.
8. [List of risk factors]

III. HOST FAMILY SELECTION AND PLACEMENT

A. *Setting into which YFU Students are Placed*

At least two persons (one an adult) who live together who have expressed the willingness to host. Sufficient emotional, physical and financial resources to host. Urban, suburban, small-town, and rural settings. Familiar with and representative of the local culture. Speak an official language of the host country. Diverse according to cultural allowances (married without kids, unmarried couple in committed relationship, single parent with kids). Represent the typical interests, activities, education, participation in community. From any race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin. Highly unusual or controversial placements will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Placements with a single adult without children can be accepted on agreement between sending and hosting YFU organization.

B. **Host Family Qualifications**

Family must be willing to host and give opportunity to integrate fully. Must understand educational and personal growth element of program. Families will not be paid by YFU for hosting students. Own bed (own room not necessary), enough space.

C. **Host Family Selection**

A family is unsuitable if their motives are incompatible with YFU, they have no home life, cannot afford to host or are unwilling to accept YFU supervision of student.

D. **Placement**

Needs a face-to-face interview (home call). Optimal placement should be aimed at. Must be made by trained and experienced volunteer. Files must be sent to hosting country before deadline to guarantee timely placement.

Special programs may offer non-homestay accommodation. It needs to be arranged by the hosting country, be safe, clean, supervised and known sufficiently early.

IV. ORIENTATION

To offer high quality programs orientation is needed.

A. **Student Orientation for YFU students** requires the following:

1. **Pre-departure Orientation:**

Covers learning process, intercultural aspects, cultural differences, need to adjust & cooperate, reflection on own identity, culture and values, need for increased communication skills, school system, family and community life, peer group relationships, administrative issues (visa, travel, rules, procedures, ...)

Attendance is mandatory. Responsibility for orientation is with sending country. Welcome letters will be sent by hosting countries.

2. **Post-Arrival Orientation:**

Immediately or within two month after arrival. Covers adaptation, intercultural issues, culture shock, country specific issues, adjustment issues.

Responsibility of hosting country.

3. **Mid-Term Orientation:**

At least once during the year. Can be national or regional event. Enhance educational process of students, intercultural learning issues, adjustment issues.

4. Re-Entry Orientation:

After returning home. Covers readjusting to home culture, opportunities of and need for ongoing intercultural educational activities.

B. Host Family Orientation:

Either as group event, a visit or written material. Cover intercultural issues, student cultural background, procedures, rules, integration issues. Done by trained and experienced staff.

V. PARTICIPANT SUPPORT/COUNSELING

A. Adjustment and Learning

Support given to help students adjust, profit from intercultural learning process, help with difficulties. YFU is not a therapeutic program. Done by trained and experienced staff.

B. Contact

Available within 24 hours for students and families. Publish emergency telephone numbers. Regular personal contact to be maintained by representatives. Records of contact to be kept.

C. Replacement

Family change should not be first resort. Family change will carefully weigh interests and risks of family, student and organization. Changes must be forwarded to sending country within 24 hours.

D. Consultation

Serious problems and especially involuntary early returns are preceded by extensive communication and discussion with full consultation of sending country. Decision is made by hosting country after consultation that must be documented. Response times in urgent cases to be kept less than 24 hours.

E. Documentation

Documentation regarding student-related problems must be kept by both sending and hosting country and must satisfy needs of sending country. Must be available to partners in case of disputes. Parts can be marked as confidential.

VI. ONGOING PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT

Selection, orientation and support help student to assume responsibility for exchange. Homecoming, evaluation, long-term evaluation are part of the program.

A. Homecoming or Post-Program Orientation

Focuses on readjustment. Includes preparation of natural family before student returns. Covers potential readjustment problems. Offer possibility for further YFU involvement.

B. Evaluation

Participants need to examine impact of program. YFU needs to maintain quality of program, feedback is important. Helps to pursue impact of exchange on national and international levels. Enhances visibility of YFU and its reputation as a serious

organization.

Must use high quality and reliable methods. Students, natural and host families should be evaluated.

C. Long-Term International Education

Show opportunities for returnees to develop further cross-cultural skills.

D. Opening to Worldwide Representation

Returnees representing YFU in youth oriented organizations.

VII. YFU STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND PROCEDURES

A. Status

YFU must be non-profit and tax exempt. Must be volunteer-based.

B. Non-Discrimination

YFU will not practice or condone discrimination. They will not exclude participants based on race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin.

C. Compliance

Will comply with consumer protection and similar laws.

D. Safety and Security

YFU is responsible for safety and security of participants. Emergency procedures exist; know where students can be contacted. Work together with embassies in case of emergency.

E. Financial Aid

Offer scholarships and other methods to allow students who cannot afford the program to participate.

F. Designated Management

Has a legally responsible body representing the organization as contact to international partners.

G. Insurance

Organizes insurance for participants and for the organization.

H. Voluntary Full Compliance with International Standards, General Policies and General Procedures

Offer high quality, use similar and standardized policies and procedures. Confirm to YFU standards (list skipped).