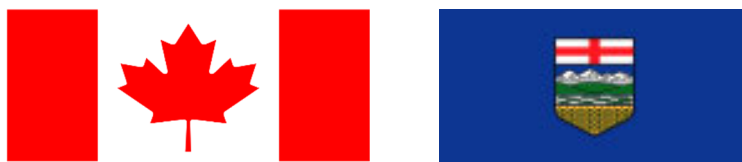


HOMESTAY INFORMATION GUIDE

Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education Alberta, Canada

International Student Program



Medicine Hat Catholic Schools

1251 – 1st Avenue SW., Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada T1A 8B4

403.527.2292 Phone 403.529.0917 Fax

www.mhcbe.ab.ca @MHCatholic

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Welcome**
- 1.2 Contact Information**
- 1.3 Visit Our Website**

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOMESTAY PROVIDERS

- 2.1 What Makes a Great Homestay?**
- 2.2 As a Host Parent, What Are You Expected to Provide?**
- 2.3 A Tour of the Neighborhood and Local Transportation**
- 2.4 How Are the Students Matched to the Families?**
- 2.5 Can You Host More Than One Student?**
- 2.6 Who is the Legal Guardian of Each International Student?**

3. PREPARING FOR YOUR STUDENT

- 3.1 How Can You Prepare For the Arrival of Your Student?**
- 3.2 Research**
- 3.3 Bedroom**
- 3.4 Storage**
- 3.5 Key**
- 3.6 Home Insurance**

4. ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT

- 4.1 Airport Pickup**
- 4.2 Culture Shock**
- 4.3 Jet Lag**

5. ARRIVAL AT THE HOUSE

- 5.1 Contacting Home**
- 5.2 Unpack**
- 5.3 House Tour**
 - 5.3.1 Phone**
 - 5.3.2 Emergencies**
 - 5.3.3 Household Security System**
 - 5.3.4 Thermostat**
 - 5.3.5 Shower and Water Heater**
 - 5.3.6 Fire Extinguisher and Smoke Alarm**
 - 5.3.7 Audio/Video Equipment**
 - 5.3.8 Microwave**

6. THE DAY OF ARRIVAL WITH YOUR STUDENT

- 6.1 Jet Lag**
- 6.2 Things You Can Do**
- 6.3 Discuss Homestay Guidelines**

7. HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

- 7.1 Curfews**
- 7.2 Schedule**
- 7.3 Bathroom Door and Shower/Bathtub**
- 7.4 Household Duties**
- 7.5 Phone**
 - 7.5.1 Long Distance Phone Access
 - 7.5.2 Times for Earliest and Latest Phone Calls
- 7.6 Internet Use**
- 7.7 Cleaning Up After Self**
- 7.8 TV Watching**
- 7.9 Meal Times**
- 7.10 Preparation of Breakfast and Lunches**
- 7.11 Laundry**
- 7.12 Activities**
- 7.13 Household Areas**
- 7.14 Food/Drink**
- 7.15 Drugs, Alcohol and Driving**

8. GETTING STARTED

- 8.1 Privacy**
- 8.2 School**
 - 8.2.1 Your Involvement with the School
 - 8.2.2 School Attendance
- 8.3 Money**
 - 8.3.1 Student's Expense Responsibility
 - 8.3.2 Allowance
 - 8.3.3 Bank Account
- 8.4 Cell Phone**
- 8.5 Travel**
- 8.6 Summer**
- 8.7 Children**
- 8.8 Household Idiosyncrasies**

9. CHALLENGES

- 9.1 Adapting to a New Culture**
- 9.2 A New Family Member**

10. WELL-BEING

10.1 Emotional Well-Being

10.1.1 Meeting People

10.1.2 Communication, Communication, Communication!

10.2 Physical Well-Being

10.2.1 Food

10.2.2 What Type of Food?

10.2.3 Table Manners

10.2.4 Meals

10.2.5 Emphasize Importance of Proper Diet, Clothing and Changing Weather

10.3 Spiritual Well-Being

10.4 Academic Well-Being

11. WHAT IF PROBLEMS ARISE?

11.1 What happens if the Student has Difficulties at the School?

11.2 What Should I Do if my Student Flagrantly Disobeys the House Rules?

11.3 What Do I Do If, Despite Everything I've tried, the Student Doesn't Fit Well Into My Household?

11.4 Accidents and Insurance

11.5 Damage to Property

12. MEDICAL VISITS AND INSURANCE CLAIMS

12.1 In Case of an Emergency

12.2 Insurance Claim

13. DEPARTURE

14. INTERN TEACHER'S HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Homestay Family Letter of Agreement

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Welcome

We would like to extend a warm welcome to you and to thank you for your participation in our Homestay Program. Staying with a local family is, for International Students, one of the most important aspects of their experience in southern Alberta. Your involvement and care are extremely important to us.

We try to match the students and the families as best as we can in order to ensure a great experience for both the students and the host families. We hope it will benefit both of you in terms of cultural exchange, entertainment and friendship. Hosting an International Student is an opportunity to gain a lifetime of memories and we truly hope that your student's stay will allow you to do so.

1.2 Contact Information

MHCBE International Education Supervisor/Homestay Coordinator
Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education International Student Services
1251 – 1st Avenue S.W., Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada T1A 8B4
Phone: 403.527.2292
Fax: 403.529.0917
E-mail: international@mhcbe.ab.ca

1.3 Visit Our Website and Social Media

www.mhcbe.ab.ca @MHCatholic

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOMESTAY PROVIDERS

2.1 What Makes a Great Homestay?

As a Homestay family, use your caring and nurturing talents to make your International Student feel accepted as a member of your family. It can be overwhelming for a student to be so far away from home and family. You need to be aware of your student's emotional and physical wellness. He/she needs the same care that you would expect a family to give to your own child if they were living abroad. Your student also needs to feel that you genuinely care about him/her. If your student feels this, the bonding process will be much easier.

We trust the Homestay parents will make decisions based on the premise of being in the student's best interest. Homestay parents are encouraged to contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** when seeking advice about decision making.

2.2 As a Host Parent, What Are You Expected to Provide?

- Private bedroom
- Three wholesome meals a day and snacks as required
- Quiet, well-lit and heated study space
- Access to the common living area of the house
- Hot water and facilities for bathing
- Laundry
- Emotional support
- Academic support
- Interaction with family members
- Participation in family activities
- Wireless Internet Connection
- Smoke-Free Home

2.3 A Tour of the Neighborhood and Local Transportation

Please ensure that your student has proper directions to and from school, and to any local attractions or meeting places if they are going out with friends or on a school outing. Please show your student the route to and from your home to their school before they start classes on the first day of school. Many hosts give their students a note with the bus number and route; you might also let them know how to use a public telephone and to dial 911 in the event of a personal emergency.

2.4 How Are the Students Matched to Families?

The International Student's application is reviewed to determine what their likes/dislikes are, their allergies, special talents (musical) etc. An effort is then made to find a family that has similar interests and experiences. This is not a science and sometimes the match is not quite right and the student may need to be moved. This is not to be viewed as a criticism of the Homestay Family or the student. Once a suitable match is found, both the host family and the natural parents are contacted for approval. Contact information is then exchanged between the host family and natural parents.

2.5 Can You Host More Than One Student?

We have found that, for many students and Homestay Families, hosting two International Students can work well. We would rather not place students together if they have the same first language. The decision to host more than one student is based on input from all stakeholders in the placement.

2.6 Who is the Legal Guardian of Each International Student?

The **Homestay Parent or School Principal/Representative** assumes custodianship on behalf of the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education of each student prior to their arrival if they are under 18 years of age and participating in the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** Homestay program.

3. PREPARING FOR YOUR STUDENT

3.1 How Can You Prepare For the Arrival of Your Student?

The Homestay Family will receive a copy of the student's application to learn about the student's likes/dislikes, where he/she comes from, and see his/her picture. Some students (primarily students from Europe and South America) like to correspond with the Homestay Family by email or Skype before arriving in Canada. This is encouraged.

3.2 Research

The Homestay Family should be generally familiar with the student's country: its population, climate, lifestyle, food, major cities, etc. Your knowledge of the student's country and culture will not only make your student feel more at home, but it will also encourage acceptance of your way of life.

You can also try to master a few simple phrases in the language of your student, or even learn to cook a traditional meal!

3.3 Bedroom

Make sure the student's room is ready. The room should be fully furnished with at least a bed, dresser, lamp, desk and closet. Also, your student may be cold at night, so provide some extra blankets or even a portable heater, if necessary.

3.4 Storage

Many international students come with extra clothing and luggage. Make sure there is enough room in your student's bedroom or elsewhere in the home for storage so that the bedroom does not become overly cluttered.

3.5 Key

Prepare a house key for your student and keep it on a key chain or lanyard. Avoid putting your address on the keychain.

3.6 Home Insurance

Ensure adequate home insurance is in place.

4. ARRIVAL IN ALBERTA

4.1 Airport Pickup

In most cases it is the responsibility of the Homestay Family to meet the student at the airport upon their arrival. It is also the Homestay Family's responsibility to return the student to the airport at their final departure. Homestay Families will be provided with a **\$200.00** (\$100 per direction) reimbursement to offset the cost of gas for the airport pick up and drop off.

Homestay Families may drive students to the airport to return home for vacations, but this is not a responsibility of the Homestay Family. If the Homestay Families are unable to drive the students in these situations, they should contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor**. This expense is not covered by the **Medicine Hat** Homestay Family Program.

4.2 Culture Shock

Imagine you are a young visitor entering a country for the first time. As you step off the plane, a voice over the loudspeaker is speaking in a language you may not understand. You see people dressed in clothing different from your own. There are posters that advertise products you have never heard of, and soon you will be meeting people you know only by name. Excited, but somewhat apprehensive, you wonder what it will be like living with these people under the same roof.

With this picture in mind, you will see why it is important for you to provide your student with not only food and shelter, but also sympathy and encouragement. The student will need your support to gain an accurate understanding of your culture. With your guidance, the student's visit can become a valuable learning experience. When a difficult situation or misunderstanding occurs, please reach out to us and we will help you through it. Imagining how you would feel if your child were abroad with another family will help you to see things from their perspective.

4.3 Jet Lag

When your student arrives, he/she probably has had a long trip and has crossed several time zones. Avoid scheduling too many activities. The ill effects of jet lag will be much less if your student sets his/her watch immediately to local time. Also, suggest they drink plenty of water, get lots of fresh air, and avoid sleeping during the day, if possible.

5. ARRIVAL AT THE HOUSE

5.1 Contacting Home

One of the first things your student should do is telephone home, Skype or send an e-mail to confirm his/her safe arrival. Their family will not sleep well until they hear that their child has safely landed.

5.2 Unpack

Show your student where he/she can store his/her extra luggage and off season clothing. Also, make sure he/she has a safe place to store travel tickets, passport, insurance documents, and money.

5.3 House Tour

After the student has unpacked, give a tour of your house, show where to find things, and explain how to operate appliances. Don't assume your student knows how to operate everyday items; anything from light switches to shower taps can be unfamiliar! Sometimes students do not want to give the impression they do not understand or their language prevents them communicating their questions. Please be sure to explain things that may seem quite obvious.

Be as clear as you can when giving the tour and let your student know some specifics like:

- Tap water is safe to drink
- Not everything can be flushed down the toilet, but toilet paper can
- Take shoes off when entering the house
- Recycling practices (they might be different in your student's home country)
- Basement bedrooms are normal in Canadian houses but may be strange and unfamiliar to your student.
- Show your student how to use appliances. If there are some of them you prefer your student not use, let them know (e.g.: BBQ, thermostat...).

5.3.1 Phone

Show your student how to use the phone, what your phone number is and what some emergency numbers are. Also show them how to use the phone directory. Explain that local calls are free of charge, but they will need to pay for their long distance calls. It is preferable to use Skype or Facetime to call home.

5.3.2 Emergencies

Ensure your student knows he/she has to dial 9-1-1 in case of emergency. (If there is an emergency involving your student, always call 9-1-1 first. Then contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** with the details of the emergency).

5.3.3 Household Security System

Show your student how to lock/unlock doors. If you have a household security system, how does it operate? Teach the student how it works and have the student practice. Also, have the student practice when an error occurs so he/she knows how to remedy the situation. Remember to inform your security company that you have a student in the house who is authorized to be there. If you have an emergency household key hidden outside, let the student know where it is.

5.3.4 Thermostat

Do you like your thermostats turned down at night and when no one is in the house? Show the student how you want it to be set up. Many of them also find our houses cold and like to turn the heat up quite high. Do you have a maximum temperature that you like the household thermostat set? Show the student your household furnace and explain how it works. You might also like to explain energy costs.

5.3.5 Shower and Water Heater

Show the student the hot water heater and explain how your water system works. Again, you might want to explain energy costs. Also, contrary to some other countries, there is no drain in the middle of the floor in your bathroom so if you have a shower curtain it needs to be placed inside the bathtub.

5.3.6 Fire Extinguisher and Smoke Alarm

Show the student where the fire extinguishers is, if you have one, and how it works. Also if you have a smoke alarm that often goes off when cooking, explain this to the student. Do not allow the burning of candles or incense. Also explain how your carbon monoxide alarm works, if you have one.

5.3.7 Audio / Video Equipment

Show the student how your TV, stereo, VCR and DVD operate. Be sure that the student knows which equipment he/she is allowed to use and how to operate it.

5.3.8 Microwave

As students may sometimes be reheating food for late meals, explain how the microwave works. Be sure they understand that metal cannot be put in the microwave. Remember, what may be common sense for us is often very different for our visiting students.

6. THE DAY OF ARRIVAL WITH YOUR STUDENT

6.1 Things you can do in the first few days

- Keep your student busy, but also allow some time alone. Remember he/she will be jet-lagged and possibly in culture shock.
- Make sure the student is familiar with your neighborhood. Students may want to go for a walk and could get lost because they are unfamiliar with the pattern of our streets.
- Take the time to learn the correct pronunciation of your student's name.
- Introduce your student to family, friends, and neighbours. Write down names to help him/her remember.
- Make sure your student has an ID card with your name, address and telephone number on it, and tell him/her to carry it at all times.
- Give him/her a key.
- Take your student to the post office and teach him/her to buy the correct stamps. Buy a postcard and encourage your student to send one to his/her parents immediately.
- Show girls where to buy personal supplies.
- Show your student the route to and from school, or where to get on/off the bus.
- Visit some local points of interest.
- Establish a pattern of daily conversation. Have your student help make a list of conversation topics to get through the first few weeks.
- Help your students secure their important documents - passports and visas.
- Relax and make the student feel comfortable.

6.2 Discuss Homestay Guidelines

Homestay Families will establish their own rules and curfews, with guidance from the **Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education** International Student Program when necessary. Respect and courtesy for these guidelines is mandatory during your student's homestay. It is important to discuss your household guidelines as soon as possible with your student as it will avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Make sure your student understands the guidelines and the reasons for them. You might want to write or type them out, depending on his/her comprehension level. Establish reasonable consequences for breaking the guidelines but remember that they have to be age-appropriate and take into consideration that the student is coming from a very different household environment. Adaptability will be important and necessary.

7. HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

Some guidelines and policies are as follows:

- Students must let you know where they are at all times.
- Students are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol even if they are over 18 and in high school.
- Students are expected to perform some light chores or assist with some duties in the house. Please discuss these chores so there is no confusion.
- Students must ask ahead of time if they need rides to special events, have friends stay overnight, etc.
- Homestay parents can limit the number of overnight stays, both in their home or if the student goes to other homes.
- Students must not be left alone overnight. Adult supervision in the home must be arranged if you are away.
- Students must attend school every day unless they are ill. Homestay parents must inform the school if the student is not able to attend school.
- Immigration Canada does not permit students to hold jobs while in Canada.
- Students must not leave the community overnight or on weekends unless the Homestay parents know where the student is going and permission was given by the natural parents.

7.1 Curfews

Curfews should be fair and reasonable for your household. Make sure your student has access to proper transportation home at night. Ensuring the safety of your family member is your responsibility.

7.2 Schedule

Think about your family's schedule and routine and decide how the student might fit into it. You can decide on times when you can and cannot be flexible.

- What time do you get up and what time do you go to bed?
- Is there a specific study time in your home?
- What time do you shower or bath?
- When do you eat meals?

7.3 Bathroom Door and Shower/Bathtub

In many other countries, the bathroom door is left closed when not in use. What is the procedure in your house? Also, can showers (or baths) be taken at any time or are there times you do not wish showers to be taken? What is the maximum amount of time that a shower should last? What is the family schedule? Once again you might have to explain energy costs.

7.4 Household Duties

Your student is not a houseguest, but rather considered as a member of your family unit. As a member of your family, he/she will be expected to work with your family to make the household run efficiently. Taking part in household chores such as sweeping and vacuuming floors, dusting, cleaning the bathtub after use, cleaning bathroom counters, assisting with meal time dishes, loading dishes in the dishwasher and helping to put groceries away are just some of the ways your student can help out. Students are expected to keep their room and study area neat and tidy. Many students may not have performed any of these responsibilities before and you may need to give proper instruction.

7.5 Phone

How does the answering machine work, if you have one? Do you want the student to answer incoming calls? Is there a limit on the length of local phone calls, particularly during prime calling hours?

7.5.1 Long Distance Phone Access

Do you want the student to use phone cards (this is recommended), get their own cell phone (extended stay), or can the student use the household phone account for their personal long distance calls? If the household phone account is used, what arrangement will be made to pay the last month's calls after the student has left? Please keep in mind that the school division is not liable for these phone bills.

7.5.2 Times for Earliest and Latest Phone Calls

Canadian protocol dictates that no phone calls should come in after 10:00 p.m. and no morning calls on weekends before 9:00 a.m. Students should be asked to respect these as quiet times in your household. What hours do you want incoming calls? (North American night hours tend to be earlier than most other cultures). This is especially important to verify because of the significant time differences between Alberta and many other countries.

7.6 Internet Use

Internet access must be available in the home. Student should be monitored as they use the internet so that they do not spend excessive time on the computer using the internet connections. As in all homes, the use of internet should be monitored carefully.

7.7 Cleaning Up

This is a homestay and you are not a maid. Explain to students that they must clean-up behind themselves (e.g. bathroom, kitchen) and whenever they use something. After the meal, is the student expected to clear their own place?

7.8 TV Watching

What are the rules and times for TV watching in your house? Students need to know this. Are there limits on the volume and the types of shows watched in your house?

7.9 Meal Times and Family Expectations

What are the common family meal times? If the student is not going to be present, how much notice is expected? If the student will be absent for a meal, should it be kept for a later time?

7.10 Preparation of Breakfasts and Lunches

Are breakfasts and lunches prepared for the student or is the student to prepare his/her own? Many students from other countries have never prepared their own meals so they may not know how to prepare a breakfast or lunch. They may need to be shown how to do it. It is also a good idea to take the student grocery shopping with you during the first week so that special foods can be purchased. Students must also be shown where all the various foods in the house are kept. Please be sure to have a discussion about the process for breakfast and lunch during schooldays. It is the responsibility of the homestay to provide three good meals each day.

7.11 Laundry

Is there a laundry schedule? Do you do the student's laundry or do they do their own? If the student is to do their own laundry, prepare to show them how (e.g. separating darks from lights, amount of detergent, etc.). The student will also have to be taught how to use the machines and told if there are any limits as to the times during which laundry can be done. Where can hand laundry be done and left to dry?

7.12 Activities

What are the common family activities and which ones is the student invited to join? What provisions will be made for the student if the family is away from the house for more than a day? If you plan on being away from home overnight, please contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor**.

7.13 Household Areas

Which areas are common and/or which areas are off limits to the student?

7.14 Food/Drink

Is your student allowed to have food and/or drinks in the bedroom, in front of the TV, or around the computer?

7.15 Drugs, Alcohol, and Driving

Even though a student may be of legal drinking age, a condition of their acceptance to study in high school requires that the student conforms to school rules that do not permit the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs. Students are informed during orientation that the international program prohibits them from driving and the use of drugs or alcohol. Non-compliance of this rule may result in the student being sent home. We remind you that, in Canada, it is illegal for people under 18 years to purchase cigarettes and to purchase and consume alcohol. If you notice your student engaging in illegal activity, contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** as soon as possible. The **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** will inform the **Office of the Superintendent**.

8. GETTING SETTLED

8.1 Privacy

Ensure that your student knows you will respect their privacy by knocking on the bedroom door before entering and ask the same in return. Make sure the student understands that you will not pry into his/her personal belongings, phone conversations, mail, etc.

8.2 School

8.2.1 Your Involvement with the School

Encourage the timely completion of homework and check on progress. Attend meetings and parent/teacher conferences when needed. Showing an interest in your student's progress contributes positively to his/her Canadian educational experience. The school may take students on occasional field trips. Information will be sent to all students' host families regarding these trips. The host family is asked to be aware of school guidelines on attendance, homework, etc. Please call the school if you have any questions or concerns.

8.2.2 School Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes daily. Homestay parents of middle and secondary students are expected to contact the school if their student will be absent due to illness. In the event that you receive contact from the school to state that your student has missed classes, contact the **International Education Supervisor**.

8.3 Money

8.3.1 Students' Expense Responsibility:

- Clothes (especially winter clothes)
- School supplies
- Personal toiletries
- Many students have their own computer/laptop. All costs associated with their computer are the responsibility of the student. It is strongly recommended that you do not have your international student use your own computer. Students should not have to pay for a shared line.
- Long distance phone calls
- Many students have their own cell phones and will pay all their own monthly bills. Alternatively students can use calling cards to make long distance calls. Do not allow a student to run up a bill on your account.
- Medicines of all kinds (prescriptions written in English)
- Dental work
- Haircuts and other personal services

- Personal entertainment and expenses
- Costs associated with participation in school sponsored activities (e.g. graduation ceremonies, school dances, extra-curricular sports, school trips, etc.)
- Stamps, stationery, books, magazines, CDs, posters, etc.

8.3.2 Allowance

International students are advised to arrange for an allowance of between \$200 and \$400 per month to cover their personal expenses. You may want to occasionally inquire about how their funds are holding out and remind them to ask their parents to send more funds when necessary. It is unwise to lend money.

8.3.3 Bank Account

You need to go with your student to open a bank account. Advise them not to carry large amounts of cash. Show your student how to use their ATM card and stress the importance of keeping the PIN number secret.

8.4 Cell phone

Help your student arrange for a personal phone, if requested.

8.5 Travel

International students may travel with their host parents or with the school. If you plan a trip to explore our country or take a vacation, you should provide the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** with information about your destination, the duration of the trip, and an address where you can be reached. If your family is planning such a trip you may want to decide with your student how expenses will be apportioned. Discussing such matters may sometimes be awkward, but it can avoid even more awkward misunderstandings later on.

International students are, as a rule, not permitted to travel on their own, even to visit relatives or close friends, unless advance arrangements have been made between host families and the student's natural parents. International students are expected to return directly to their home country upon the completion of the program. If special travel arrangements have been made, you will be informed in advance. Even if a student is over the age of 18, they must receive permission from the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education International Student Program to travel outside of the area on their own.

8.6 Summer

During the summer break, if you want to use the student's accommodation (e.g. for guests, short-term students), ask your student to pack up the room neatly. In most cases, we do not operate a summer Homestay Program.

8.7 Children

Your children may initially feel some jealousy toward the student because he/she is receiving additional attention. Try to include your children in the orientation activities.

8.8 Household Idiosyncrasies

Every household has those things that do not work in a "normal" fashion. Insure that your student understands these (we tend to forget about them because we deal with them all the time).

9. CHALLENGES

9.1 Adapting to a New Culture

Your new family member will experience many changes during his/her first few weeks. After the initial excitement of being in a new environment wears off, your international student may suffer from culture shock and become homesick. As the “honeymoon period” fades, there may be dissatisfaction with both parties. Try to work through this to a common ground.

Your student may feel disorientated and may suffer physical side effects. He/she may become withdrawn, uncommunicative, or moody, and express the desire to return home. This is normal under the circumstances and should only last for a short time. As your student grows accustomed to the new environment, he/she will relax and gradually feel better.

Activity is a good cure for homesickness. If the student continues to be withdrawn and shows symptoms such as excessive sleeping, marked weight loss or gain, acute depression, or other irregular behavior, there may be other, more fundamental problems involved and you should notify the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor**.

9.2 A New Family Member

Since experiencing family life is one of the best ways to learn about a culture, you should try as much as possible to let your student take on the role of a family member. This role may be quite different from what the student is accustomed to, but it should be one that is natural for you and your family. You will find that treating your international student as a family member will create genuine ties of friendship and foster better understanding of your way of life.

Living as a family member does not mean having special privileges. It may be easier for your student to learn your way of life if you avoid giving preferential treatment. Give him/her some small household chores, just as you would to a son or a daughter, but don't assign tasks that you would normally hire someone to do, such as child-care. It is important not to leave your student alone for long periods of time. One of the parents, or an older son or daughter, should be home during the day to keep him/her company.

10. WELL-BEING

10.1 Emotional Well-Being

Providing opportunities for your new family member to interact with other people will reduce boredom and improve emotional well-being. Include your student in your family activities, but as with any teenager give him/her adequate time to spend with friends. Include your student in family discussions and decisions. Ask their advice. It might be interesting to learn how another culture might handle certain situations.

10.1.1 Meeting People

You should make an effort to introduce your international student to other young people of the same age group. You might consider planning a reception with friends and neighbors for this purpose. Although friendships are encouraged for the students, romantic attachments are discouraged.

10.1.2 Communication, Communication, Communication!

This year will be a learning experience for you in many areas. There will be awkward moments, confusing situations, and times of disillusionment. Strong communication skills are the key components to every healthy relationship. Sometimes communication is difficult and compromise is needed. Sometimes we need time to think things through. Difficult situations can usually be worked out if they are dealt with calmly and respectfully.

- Disorientation and physical discomfort can be expected.
- Compassion and consideration will help overcome culture shock and homesickness.
- In cases where a mutually satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, mediation is available through the International Education Consultant.

10.2 Physical Well-Being

Encourage your student to exercise, get proper sleep, and eat a balanced diet. Most students like to be involved in physical activity, so encourage your student to participate. Physical fitness will help them feel well and happy.

10.2.1 Food

Provide healthy nutritious meals and snacks to ensure physical well-being. If you will not be home for dinner, try to prepare a meal that can be easily heated or microwaved.

10.2.2 What Type of Food?

One of the most difficult adjustments for your international student may be dietary. Canadian food can be a problem for international students at first and special considerations may have to be given due to cultural differences. Your student may require certain foods in his/her diet.

Take your student shopping with you, especially to the ethnic food section, and ask your student what he/she would like. For example, rice is an important part of an Asian diet, and rice and brown beans are often in a Latin American diet. Have your student select the type of rice. Minute Rice or Uncle Bens is nothing like the rice your student usually would eat.

Many Asian students prefer a hot breakfast and a hot lunch. Latin American students usually eat a large meal at lunch time.

Foods favored by young people in your culture may not be the same ones enjoyed by young people in another. Nevertheless, you do not need to arrange special meals for your student, unless the youth has special dietary restrictions due to medical or religious reasons. Very likely the student, perhaps after some initial hesitation, will learn to enjoy the types of food you usually eat.

10.2.3 Table Manners

Cultural differences may involve not only a variety of food types, but also may include differences in eating times, methods of serving and presenting food and the manner in which food is eaten. Since your family's table manners may not correspond to your student's, show him/her the proper portion to take and how to eat in a Canadian way.

Give your student a tour of your kitchen, naming food items in the cupboards and refrigerator. Encourage him/her to prepare a favorite dish for your family.

10.2.4 Meals

You must provide three meals a day, but how this is done is up to each individual family. In most families, it is common for individual family members to make their own breakfast and lunch, and then share in the preparation and eating of an evening meal. The student is a temporary family member, not a guest, and as such conforms to your family practices.

10.2.5 Emphasize Importance of Diet, Clothing, and Changing Weather

As Albertans, we know how the weather can change quickly and drastically. Many foreign students are not aware of this. They need to be taught that when they go out for the day, they need to be prepared for any change in weather. Layering is the best solution for dressing in Alberta's weather. It is also important that a proper diet is maintained in order to remain healthy.

10.3 Spiritual Well-Being

If your international student practices a faith other than your own, you will want to provide a list of places to worship. Very often, the youth may wish to learn about your family's religion. If so, it would be perfectly appropriate to invite him/her to attend religious services with you.

10.4 Academic Well-Being

As you would for your own child, you may need to provide academic support for your student. Provide opportunities for students to study.

10.5 Help With English

Most of our international students will require assistance with English. Keep your language simple and direct, but do not talk down to the student. Put sticky labels on common items in the house to help the student learn these names. Put common English words on the refrigerator. Keep a language dictionary handy for quick translation to help with the student's assignments; do not do the work for them. Help the student by editing homework, but be careful not to change the content, even if you do not agree with it.

11. WHAT IF PROBLEMS ARISE?

11.1 What Happens If the Student has Difficulties at the School?

Should any concerns arise with the international student, host families are asked to contact the school Principal. If necessary, the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** will be contacted by the school. Serious problems such as habitual absences or lack of motivation at school may result in the student being sent home.

11.2 What Should I Do If the Student Flagrantly Disobeys the House Rules?

Contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor**. The situation will be reviewed and a solution or consequence will be determined.

11.3 What Do I Do If, Despite Everything I've Tried, the Student Doesn't Fit Well Into My Household?

This seldom happens, but it does happen. A representative from the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education will be in contact with you within the first few weeks of your student's arrival to see how things are going and to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. We encourage you to let the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** know as soon as you can if you are having difficulties. If, after reviewing the situation, it is felt the difficulties cannot be resolved, we will move the student.

11.4 Accidents and Insurance

In the unlikely event that your visitor requires medical attention, you are authorized to make necessary arrangements. All our international students are covered by Ingle International. Please visit our website www.mhcbe.ab.ca /Programs & Service/International Education.

11.5 Damage to Property

If a student causes damage to your property, please notify the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** of the incident immediately. Take pictures, as it may also be necessary to inform your insurance company of any incident. Students are not responsible for normal wear and tear.

12. MEDICAL VISITS & INSURANCE CLAIMS

12.1 In Case of an Emergency

In an emergency, please call the emergency number located on the International Student Health Insurance Student ID card or Claim Form.

12.2 Insurance Claims

If the student requires emergency prescription drugs, they will have to pay first and then get their money back from the insurance company. For that they will have to start a claim form through the service provider, Ingle International. These forms are available on the International Health Insurance link on the MHCBE International Education website.

13. DEPARTURE

Please accompany your student to the airport. Before departure, you should check that the student has his/her travel documents (passport, visa, return ticket, etc.). In most cases, you will need to confirm reservations before departure.

You are encouraged to give the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** your evaluation of the program: its successes, problems, and your suggestions for other host families. If your experience has been positive, we hope you will tell other interested families about the program.

THANK YOU!

The Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education International Students Program wishes to thank you for your important role in promoting friendly relations among our international students.

As a Homestay Family you are ambassadors for our community, our province and our country. You are helping to promote cultural diversity and understanding in our world.

APPENDIX A

Homestay Family Letter of Agreement

HOMESTAY FAMILY LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Thank you for becoming part of the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education Homestay Program. It is an integral part of international education and has an effect on the reputation of our community and province.

In our continuing efforts to insure our homestay placements are a rewarding experience for you and for our student it is important all parties maintain open communication. It is your responsibility to contact the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** to discuss any matters of concern regarding your student before the situation becomes unmanageable. They will assist in finding mutually agreeable solutions through compromise and discussion.

In being a Homestay Family you have agreed to the following:

1. Provide the student with a home environment that is safe and clean.
2. Provide the student with a room his/her own. The room will contain a bed, closet, dresser, study space with a desk and a lamp, and a night table.
3. Provide the student with wholesome food each day.
4. Provide laundry facilities with instructions for use.
5. Firmly, yet gently, enforce all house rules as explained to the student.
6. Be open and honest, tolerant and respectful in communicating with the student.
7. Arrange for pick-up transportation when the student arrives and departs.
8. The Homestay Family must inform the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** of any time they plan on being away from home without their student and must make temporary arrangements for the student.
9. Orient the student to their neighbourhood, including matters such as public transportation, banking locations and procedures, nearby stores and recreation facilities.
10. Orient the student to household fire procedures.
11. Attend Homestay information/orientation sessions when available.
12. Ensure you have adequate home owner insurance in place.

We further understand:

- All hosts and students are expected to contribute to the creation of a welcome and secure home environment. If it is learned that there are problems in the home or there is a violation of one of the Homestay Program Guidelines, and efforts to find a solution are unsuccessful, the placement may be terminated and the student withdrawn from the home.
- A 30 day period of notice must be given by the host family in the event they request the student be removed from their home. For serious cases, one month notice may not be considered necessary. This determination will come from the **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** in consultation with the **Superintendent of Schools** after consultation with affected parties.
- The homestay parent(s) of primary and secondary students are required to monitor student attendance at school. Should the Homestay parent receive notice from the school that their student is not attending regularly; the **MHCBE-International Education Consultant** is to be informed immediately.
 - The **MHCBE-International Education Supervisor** will immediately notify the **Office of the Superintendent**.

I/We have read and agree to the terms outlined in the booklet entitled “Homestay Information Guide”.

Signature (Homestay Parent)

Signature (Homestay Parent)

Print Name (Homestay Parent)

Print Name (Homestay Parent)

Date