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|  | Homestay guidelines for hosting sister school students  March 2014 |

# What is Homestay?

Homestay is a term used to describe full board accommodation offered by a family, a couple or a single person, selected by a school.

The provision of quality homestay accommodation for visiting sister school students is one of the most important responsibilities undertaken within sister school partnerships by schools.

# Cost and Payment

The cost of homestay accommodation is an amount agreed to by the two schools involved, based on cost recovery principle. Some schools opt for the arrangement of host schools covering all costs. This will mean that the visiting students will not have to pay for homestay. When Victorian students visit their sister school, the same arrangement will be reciprocated, which means Victorian students will not have to pay for homestay.

# Responsibilities of Host Schools

Schools have a duty of care for all visiting students from their sister school. Schools are required to demonstrate due diligence in the selection of homestay families and monitoring of homestay arrangements. They are responsible for providing adequate information and ongoing support for homestay families through the period of the homestay arrangement.

## Duty of care

The visiting students’ overall welfare is the responsibility of the host school and the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Schools will provide homestay families and visiting students with 24 hour contact numbers and will be available to respond to emergencies or complex situations. Schools will ensure that the levels of supervision provided by the families are appropriate, including supervision to and from school and outside school hours. Schools will also ensure that the families has appropriate information.

## Ensuring suitability of homestay families

Suitability to host a student will be determined by the school, and a visit to the homestay may be required to assess whether the living environment is appropriate for a student. When selecting homestay families, schools need to take into consideration the age, maturity, physical characteristics and gender of the sister school student, as well as the following:

* The living arrangements of families’ residences, for instance, sleeping arrangements, food to be provided, study facilities available to the student, pets, and smoking or alcohol consumption habits.
* The suitability of all persons who will be in the host family’s household for the duration of the student’s stay. All adults over 18 years old regularly in the household are required to have a cleared Working With Children Check (WWCC) before they are eligible to host a student. Further information can be found at: [www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren) or on 1300 652 879.

## Monitoring homestay

Schools should monitor students who are placed in homestay accommodation and maintain regular contact with homestay families to optimise the students’ experience in Victoria.

Schools are also encouraged to conduct a survey of their homestay families, after hosting, to ensure that students’ needs have been met and issues are discussed for future reference.

## Documenting homestay arrangements

To ensure that both visiting students and homestay families gain the most out of the experiences, schools are advised to obtain critical information and keep these written records, in addition to risk and emergency management plans. This should include

* Visiting students’ personal information, medical information and authority and medical release form from the visiting students’ parents/Guardians – see attached proforma
* Which student is staying with which host, the host’s contact details and emergency contacts of the student.

## Providing information to homestay families

It is essential that homestay accommodation is of high quality and provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment. The host school will work closely with homestay families to ensure they are well informed and supported at all times.

Schools should organise a briefing session for homestay families prior to the overseas student arriving at their home. This briefing should cover the following:

* Cultural, linguistic and religious information about the country where the students are from to ensuring that the the families of any significant cultural differences to avoid misunderstandings (For country specific information, visit [Austrade website](http://www.austrade.gov.au/Export/Export-Markets/Countries): <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Export/Export-Markets/Countries>)
* The needs of young people away from their home environment
* A flexible approach to matters of discipline, house rules and cooperative living
* What to do if a problem occurs (refer to school’s emergency management plan), including a 24 hour emergency contact number.

Schools should also provide homestay families with a copy of visiting students’ personal information, medical information and signed student authority and medical release form.

Providing information to visiting students prior to arrival

Prior to their arrival, host schools can provide the following information via the sister school to the visiting students and their families:

* Introduction to the school
* In-school program if possible
* All necessary forms for personal information and medical information (see page 3 for details)
* Host family information if possible and contact details so that visiting students can get into touch with the host to establish rapport
* A 24 hour emergency contact number

Schools can also choose to provide the visiting students with “responsibilities of visting students” via their sister school. See page 3 for details.

# Responsibilities of Homestay Families

Homestay families along with the host school and the DET are required to exercise a duty of care towards visiting sister school students.

Homestay families

* Must ensure they provide a safe and comfortable living environment suitable for a student, with appropriate study facilities.
* Must ensure that frequent visitors to the home over 18 years old obtain WWCCs.
* Homestay families should participate in a briefing session with the school prior to the student’s arrival to develop their knowledge and understanding of issues relating to the visiting students.
* Must immediately report any critical or serious incidents involving a student to the Principal.
* Are required to work in partnership with school in monitoring and supervising students
* Will have the responsibility of taking the student to and from school and provide other transport needs.
* Ensure that students are provided with three meals a day, seven days a week, with appropriate quantity.
* Ensure that they brief the student on the following:
  + Travelling to and from school arrangements
  + Meal times
  + safety issues and assist them in developing awareness of risks and dangerous situations, such as traffic rules
  + family’s emergency procedures, eg. Emergency evacuation location etc.
  + House rules such as access to television and internet.

# Responsibilities of Visiting Students

* Show courtesy to their homestay host
* Show respect for the home and belongings of their homestay host
* Abide by the homestay family rules
* Keep their room clean

# Proformas and Templates:

1. [Sister school student information form](file:///R:/INTERED/1812-IPSTU/PROGRAMS/Sister%20school%20Guidelines%20redevelopment/Sister%20school%20resource%20kit/Homestay%20guidelines/Sister%20school%20visits%20-%20Student%20Forms%20-%20Student%20Information.docx)
2. [Sister school student medical details form](file:///R:/INTERED/1812-IPSTU/PROGRAMS/Sister%20school%20Guidelines%20redevelopment/Sister%20school%20resource%20kit/Homestay%20guidelines/Sister%20school%20visits%20-%20Student%20Forms%20-%20Medical%20Details.docx)
3. [Sister school student authority and medical release form](file:///R:/INTERED/1812-IPSTU/PROGRAMS/Sister%20school%20Guidelines%20redevelopment/Sister%20school%20resource%20kit/Homestay%20guidelines/Sister%20school%20visits%20-%20Student%20Forms%20-%20Authority%20and%20Medical%20Release.docx)
4. [Visiting sister school students and homestay families](file:///R:/INTERED/1812-IPSTU/PROGRAMS/Sister%20school%20Guidelines%20redevelopment/Sister%20school%20resource%20kit/Homestay%20guidelines/Homestay%20match%20list.docx)