

CONSULTATION DRAFT

BRITISH COLUMBIA K-12 HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

About the Consultation Draft

This document is a consultation draft of the *British Columbia K-12 Homestay Guidelines*. The role of the final document, once complete, will be to establish provincial K-12 international student homestay best-practice guidelines.

This draft was developed between October 2014 and January 2015 by the Provincial K-12 Homestay Guidelines Working Group. The Ministry of Education wishes to acknowledge the following organizations for participation in the working group: School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake), School District No. 36 (Surrey), School District No. 39 (Vancouver), School District No. 45 (West Vancouver), School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes), and Langley Christian School.

This draft is being sent to BC school districts, independent schools and education partners. It is also available on the Ministry of Education website:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=8A7A13A5F553472A9A28C9B60086C68A>

Providing Feedback

- (1) BC school districts, independent schools, companies providing homestay services to K-12 international students studying in BC, and other education partners are requested to **email feedback on the draft by April 15, 2015** (revised date) to: international.education@gov.bc.ca
- (2) All stakeholder feedback will be carefully considered. The Provincial K-12 Homestay Guidelines Working Group will review feedback and will make recommendations to the Ministry of Education on further revisions and the content of the final document.
- (3) A final version of the *British Columbia K-12 Homestay Guidelines* is expected to be completed and announced by the end of June 2015.
- (4) Questions may be sent to international.education@gov.bc.ca

INTRODUCTION

About BC K-12 Homestay Guidelines

The purpose of the BC K-12 Homestay Guidelines is to provide consistent, province-wide best practice standards for BC’s K-12 homestay sector. The Guidelines were developed between October 2014 and January 2015 by a working group comprised of K-12 school district, independent school and Ministry of Education representatives. These Guidelines will be subsequently consulted on with the K-12 sector in the spring of 2015. They represent the commonly-held view on industry best-practice. Federal, provincial and municipal laws apply to homestays. It is the responsibility of each of the groups described in this document to be familiar with applicable legislation. Groups are each responsible for seeking legal advice as needed.

Who Should Use These Guidelines

BC’s K-12 Homestay Guidelines consider short-term and long-term homestay placements of K-12 students as determined by BC international student programs or by professional homestay companies working with schools and districts.

The document provides best-practice standards, arranged in six sections, for groups involved in arranging, working with or participating in homestays.

Group		Section
Homestay program providers	Companies or organizations that arrange K-12 homestay placements in BC	Section 1
International student programs	BC schools or districts that enroll international students	Section 2
Host families	BC families that host international students; also known as homestay families	Section 3
K-12 international students	K-12 students who ordinarily reside outside of BC and Canada who come to BC and enrol in a K-12 program of study	Section 4
Parents / guardians of international students	An international student’s parent or legally appointed guardian	Section 5
International student agents	Individuals or companies that assist international students in selecting a suitable country, city and school in which to study	Section 6

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About Homestay in British Columbia

The Province of British Columbia and BC school district and independent school international student programs are proud of BC's world class education, our welcoming communities and our incredible natural environment. Recognizing that homestay plays a pivotal role in an international student's experience, BC is committed to high-quality homestay experiences for all students.

A homestay is a formal arrangement by an international student program, or its delegates, to house an international student with an approved family during the course of study. This family and its residence are both commonly referred to as the 'homestay'. BC's Guidelines refer to this family as the host family. A K-12 homestay student is a minor child (i.e. under 19) from outside BC who pays a fee to stay with a homestay family in return for meals, a private room, family support, and various cultural experiences.

In BC, school districts and independent schools offer homestay using three different administrative models:

- Some school districts and independent schools run their own homestay programs;
- Some schools and districts contract the administration of their homestay programs out to other homestay program providers; and
- Some school districts or independent schools keep lists of homestay program providers for international parents and students.

There are also homestay service providers, such as private companies or websites, which might not have a relationship with a K-12 school district or independent school. Some parents and/or international students may be considering working with such a homestay program provider or, alternatively, placing the student with a relative or family friend. Parents and international students considering these options may want to consult with the school district or independent school international student program before finalizing their decision. The international student program may have policies or information directly relating to these situations.

Guidelines

Section 1: Homestay Program Provider Responsibilities

To promote the best possible homestay experience for international K-12 students, homestay program providers should:

1. Maintain a homestay screening process for host families and for international students to determine suitability. The host family screening process should be published and should include:
 - a. Scheduled home inspections and host parent interviews;
 - b. Scheduled criminal records check for all adult homestay household members; and
 - c. Reference checks for the host family parent(s).
2. Gather appropriate and up-to-date personal records/contact information for the student, parent/guardian, custodian and/or host family, including:
 - a. Legal first and last names (i.e. as they appear in a passport);
 - b. Gender;
 - c. Age;
 - d. Country of residence;
 - e. Address; and
 - f. Contact phone number and email address.
3. Ensure that all data collected and any information distributed by the homestay program provider complies with protection of privacy legislation.
4. Develop and deliver a comprehensive training program for new host families to ensure familiarity and understanding with best practices and develop a process for regular host families to stay current with best practice.
5. Place no more than two international students with a host family at the same time.

A community care licence will be required under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act (the "CCALA") if a host family cares for three or more persons in his/her home. The CCALA may also apply to other homestay arrangements, depending upon the facts of each situation. Homestay program providers do not require a license under the CCALA unless they are providing care (beyond that provided in homestay) to children directly or through a third party provider. A homestay program provider that is unsure whether the CCALA applies should contact the regional medical health officer for further information.

A homestay program provider is an organization or company that arranges homestays. Sometimes the homestay program will be provided by the school or school district. Sometimes the provider will be a third-party company or organization.

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6. Inform the host family of potential student placements by using a standardized student profile form that includes the dates of accommodation, special requirements, and relevant medical and behavioral background.
7. Liaise with the student, school and host family and provide each with support.
8. Communicate with international students and host families on a regular basis.
9. Implement and maintain quality assurance and program evaluation mechanisms.
10. Offer conflict resolution services (and the opportunity to reach consensus) to both the host family and the international student.
11. Maintain clear, published standards and procedures relating to homestay, including procedures for the dismissal of host families in warranted cases and procedures for transferring students to a different host family.
12. Develop separate reference manuals for host families and for international students (and their parents) that describe relevant legislation, standards and procedures. Manuals should contain standards and procedures applicable to the full range of a host family's and an international student's homestay experience.
13. Maintain clear, published fee information including:
 - a. Terms of Agreement – payment of fees to whom and when;
 - b. Per diem and monthly homestay fees;
 - c. Services included with fees;
 - d. Additional fees (e.g. airport pick-up or drop-off or storage fees); and
 - e. Refund policy.
14. Provide, as appropriate, the international student with access to a person who can speak the student's primary language.
15. Share medical or mental health concerns that arise during the course of the homestay with the international student program, the host family or the student's parent/guardian(s) as needed.
16. Provide additional standards and procedural supports and requirements for younger homestay students as appropriate.
17. Publish the homestay program provider's legal limitations.
18. Inform international students who are about to be placed with a host family about the BC Children's Helpline (310-1234), which operates twenty-four hours a day, year round, and may be called in cases where the international student feels he/she is being mistreated or hurt in the home or at school.

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Section 2: International Student Program Responsibilities

To promote the best possible homestay experience for international K-12 students, international student programs should:

1. Identify the custodian, appointed by the parent/guardian, who is responsible for the care of each international student. The international student program should articulate its expectations of a custodian.
2. Develop clear procedures for host family parents in connecting with their international student's school. Host family involvement with ELL/ESL support, attendance, parent and student conferences, academic progress reporting, and extra-curricular activities will promote "school connectedness" and support student learning and success.
3. Develop procedures and templates for communicating with the parent/guardian.
4. Support host families with conflict resolution procedures and processes to resolve the variety of issues that may arise during the homestay. A clear outline of when and who to contact should additional support be required is highly recommended.
5. Encourage homestay families to be specific and thoughtful regarding the school district or independent school's Code of Conduct. Considerations such as curfew, internet use, chores, etc. should be clearly outlined and communicated to the student. Ensuring that all responsibilities are developmentally appropriate and suitable within the context of the home is important.
6. Provide host families with a variety of resources to support their international student in acquiring English or French as an additional language.
7. Publish the international student program's legal limitations.
8. Develop a participation agreement with the student and parent/guardian that includes expectations of student behavior, conflict resolution processes and grounds for dismissal from homestay and/or the school/district program.

The International Student Program is the administrative group or unit within a school district or independent school that arranges for and supports international students while they are studying in a BC K-12 school.

Section 3: Host Family Responsibilities

To promote the best possible homestay experience for international K-12 students, host family parent(s) should:

1. Provide a caring, nurturing and supportive environment for international students.

The host family, also known as the homestay family, is the BC family that welcomes an international student into its home to live while the student studies at a BC K-12 school.

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2. Be 25 years of age or older and be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada.
3. Agree to scheduled in-home inspections by either the international student program or the homestay program provider or both and criminal record checks (for anyone living in the home who is 18 years or older).
4. Have no more than two international students in the homestay at the same time.
A community care licence will be required under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act (the "CCALA") if a host family cares for three or more persons in his/her home. The CCALA may also apply to other homestay arrangements, depending upon the facts of each situation. A host family that is unsure whether the CCALA applies should contact the regional medical health officer for further information.
5. Provide three nutritious meals and access to snacks per day.
6. Provide a clean and tidy home with a private, adequately furnished bedroom, with access to:
 - a. an area with a desk, chair and adequate lighting for homework;
 - b. a bathroom, linens and use of laundry facilities; and
 - c. entry into the home like any other member of the family (e.g. house key and alarm code, if applicable).
7. Ensure the house is safe and complies with the BC Building Code and/or the local building bylaw, as applicable, and with the local fire code.
8. Ensure a student's general well-being, seek medical attention when necessary, and report any significant medical or mental health issues to the school, the homestay program provider and the international student program.
9. Inform the school or international student program if the student drinks alcohol, takes non-prescribed drugs or breaks the law.
10. Ensure the home and auto insurance policy adequately covers students residing within their home; some policies do not cover homestay students.
11. Promote strong connections between an international student and their parents, schools and communities by:
 - a. Using the student's desired language of study (English or French) in the home.
 - b. Imposing reasonable limits on the student's personal use of the internet (i.e. number of hours/day and appropriate times of day).
 - c. Negotiating and enforcing an appropriate and reasonable curfew and house rules for the student.
 - d. Assisting the student in seeking extra-curricular activities and sports.
 - e. Attending school or district orientation for host families.

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Section 4: International Student Responsibilities

International students coming to BC and entering a homestay should:

1. Engage with the host family and the school and seek out opportunities to become involved in the school and family life.
2. Communicate regularly with their parent/guardian and with their host family.
3. Communicate significant issues or concerns to the host family, parent/guardian, school principal, vice-principal or teachers, homestay program provider or international school program as appropriate.
4. Understand that the school district or independent school international student program may require a student to move homestays or withdraw from the international student program in cases where accommodation that has been arranged privately is deemed to be unsafe or unsuitable.
5. Understand that there is a BC Children's Helpline (310-1234), which operates twenty-four hours a day, year round, and may be called in cases where the international student feels he/she is being mistreated or hurt in the home or at school.

International students are from outside Canada who do not meet the Ministry of Education's funding eligibility requirements and/or who have to obtain the authorization of the Canadian government to enter Canada with the intention of pursuing studies longer than six months.

Section 5: Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

An international student's parent/guardian should:

1. Accurately complete the application and in-take materials and disclose all of the student's relevant information, such as medical conditions, so that the homestay program provider and the host family are fully able to support and care for the student for the duration of the homestay.
2. Stay in regular touch with the student to monitor that the student is coping well with the pressures and stresses that come with living and studying in a new country and learning a new language.
3. Report significant concerns to the homestay program provider.
4. Understand that the school district or independent school international student program may require a student to move homestays or withdraw from the international student program in cases where accommodation that has been arranged privately is deemed to be unsafe or unsuitable.

Parents are the biological or adoptive parents of an international student. Guardians are persons who have been legally authorized to act in place of the student's parents. The legal guardian is distinct from a custodian.

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5. Understand that there is a BC Children’s Helpline (310-1234), which operates twenty-four hours a day, year round, and may be called in cases where the international student feels he/she is being mistreated or hurt in the home or at school.

Section 6: International Student Agent Responsibilities

International students and their families sometimes hire agents to help place the student in an international student program. International student agents should:

1. Provide support to international student programs, homestay program providers, and international students and their families, particularly in regard to communicating with the parent/guardian if and when requested by the homestay program provider or the international student program.

Agents are paid consultants, based in BC or abroad, who help to arrange aspects of an international student’s education or travel. In cases where the agent arranges for the homestay, the agent would also be considered the homestay program provider and would be expected to meet the responsibilities described in section 1

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Glossary/Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines:

Custodian is a person who is appointed by a child's parent/guardian, through an international student program's authorized document, to care for that child. International student programs and the Canadian federal government require that international students who are minor children have a custodian while studying in the province of British Columbia.

Code of Conduct is a set of written rules on how to behave, and interact with other people. Under the Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order, boards of education must establish one or more codes of conduct for the schools within their jurisdiction and ensure that schools within implement the codes.

Guardian as under the BC Family Law Act, the parent of a child is generally that child's guardian. A guardian has legal responsibilities and rights for that child.

Homestay is a formal arrangement by an international student program, or its delegates, to house an international student with an approved family during their course of study. This family and its residence are both commonly referred to as the 'homestay'.

Homestay Program Provider is the entity that places students with a host family. Depending on the circumstances, the homestay program provider could be an independent school or school district, a company or organization contracted by the international student program, or a business or individual that is not in a relationship with the international student program.

Host Family or Homestay Family is the family with which an international student resides during the course of a homestay.

International Student refers to students from outside Canada who do not meet the Ministry of Education's funding eligibility requirements and/or have to obtain the authorization of the Canadian government to enter Canada with the intention of pursuing studies longer than six months.

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International Student Program is an administrative unit within an independent school or school district. The international student program administers, facilitates or arranges for the education, accommodation and care of international students.

Minor Child refers to any person below the age of 19 years. Minor children require certain care by either a guardian or custodian.

Parent refers to the biological or adoptive parent of a child.

Private and/or Independently Arranged Accommodation is accommodation that has been arranged for an international student that is not provided by a school or school district approved homestay program provider.

Residence/Boarding refers to accommodation where two or more minor students live together, typically on the school property and administered by a BC independent school. Residence/Boarding situations are not covered by these Guidelines.

School Connectedness is a term used by educators to describe the level of connection that a student feels for their school. Research shows that a strong feeling of connection to a school and to the adults in that school lead to stronger school performance.