



The  
**EXPERIMENT**  
in International Living

# EXPERIMENTER FAMILY HANDBOOK

Guidelines and resources to support your  
Experimenter for a successful and safe  
journey abroad with The Experiment



# Welcome To The Experiment Family

First, we want to say “thank you.” Thank you for trusting us with the young person in your life. It’s a responsibility we take very seriously at The Experiment. Thank you for allowing your teen to experience the world through an Experiment program. This summer will be joyful, enriching, challenging and full of growth for your Experimenter. We hope you share our excitement as we all prepare for your young people to embark on the trip of a lifetime.

This handbook is a tool to help you prepare yourselves and your Experimenter for their experience abroad. Your Experimenter will also receive a handbook, and we suggest you each review the handbooks and then take time to discuss them together. The Experimenter Handbook is very comprehensive and also includes activities and “Things to Consider” sections to serve as a tool-kit for their program preparation. We ask that you encourage your Experimenter to thoroughly review their handbook, and to participate in some of the activities. In the Experimenter Handbook we also suggest conversation topics for your Experimenter to discuss with you (e.g, making a communication plan), these are matched here in your handbook. Additionally, in each handbook are the [Conditions of Participation](#), which you have all signed, and a copy of all our policies. We strongly encourage you to read through these documents with your Experimenter. The policies and guidelines help you and your Experimenter know what is expected and how we can all work together to make your summer safe and successful.

This handbook also serves as a complement to the pre-departure emails you will receive before the program. It’s pertinent for you and your teen to review our [pre-departure information](#) and [program-specific planning documents](#), which includes the packing list, resources available through our partnership with International SOS, the Experimenter handbook, guidance on personal funds abroad, and information about The Experiment’s accident and sickness insurance.

Before the program, you will receive a program itinerary, and a group list with group leader biographical information, and a description of your teen’s homestay community. These emails will give you information about your teen’s schedule throughout the summer and the other students in the group. After program departure, you will receive your Experiment’s host family information.

Welcome to The Experiment, we are excited to have you with us.

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# ABOUT THE EXPERIMENT

# ABOUT THE EXPERIMENT

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For 90 years, The Experiment in International Living has been the pioneer in cross-cultural education for young people. Experiment programs introduce participants to critical local and global issues through homestays, language training, community service/internship, regional exploration, and the arts. Our group leaders facilitate substantive immersion programs by collaborating with experienced in-country educators, faculty, language trainers, artists, thematic experts, and chefs.

The Experiment's focus has always been to improve understanding across cultures and expand the worldview of U.S. students. The Experiment remains a leader in the field of intercultural exchange and, with 75,000 alumni, continues to build on its legacy.

### The Experiment's Founding Philosophy:

- Go to learn, not to teach.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Turn a crisis into an adventure.
- Learn to live together by living together.
- Be quick to observe, slow to judge.

In preparing for your Experimenter's program, it is important to recognize that they will be participating in neither a highly structured tour-based trip nor a traditional, strict classroom-based academic experience. Instead, they will be involved in a program that will ask them to develop a deep understanding of and connection to the people and culture of the host communities and that will challenge them to build the confidence, skills, and abilities necessary to connect and engage on this level. Experiment alumni emphasize that they will get the most out of their experience if they approach the summer with an open mind, patience, and enthusiasm.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Almost all The Experiment programs follow the same four-part program structure: orientation, homestay, thematic exploration or excursion, and reflection.

### Orientation

During the orientation, participants start adapting to their host country by spending a few days in the capital or another major city to become oriented to their new environment. The first few days gives the Experiment group the opportunity to begin to absorb the customs, speak the language, and, on many programs, begin exploring the program's theme before moving on to their homestay community.

### Homestay

Throughout the homestay, participants will participate in the daily life of a local community as a member of a family, not as a tourist. Periodically during the homestay period, they take part in cultural activities with their host family and other members of the Experiment group. The homestay is the centerpiece of every Experiment program.

### Program Focus

Whether your Experimenter decides to pursue their artistic interests, explore important historical and cultural settings, study a language, examine food systems and issues of sustainability, experience natural and ecological sites, or consider themes of peace, politics, and human rights, they will have the chance to experience immersion in a deeply

enriching aspect of their host community. They will meet and engage with local experts who will enhance their understanding of the culture and program's focus.

### Reflection

Participants conclude by celebrating their collective experience and reflecting on what they have learned and gained during the program. After returning home, Experimenters are encouraged to share with friends and family what they experienced and discovered and to consider how they can integrate what they learned about themselves and the world into their life moving forward.

Please see [The Experimenter Handbook](#) for interactive, reflective exercises to prepare for their return to their home communities from program.

## EXPERIMENT GROUPS

Experiment programs are intentionally designed to be a collective group experience; this group environment is a significant part of Experimenter learning and growth. Each Experiment group develops its own identity throughout the course of the program. Experiment groups promote an atmosphere of collective care, respect and understanding, experiential learning, and growth. Just as they are introduced to the diversity of their host communities through homestays and excursions, they will also learn an incredible amount about the diversity within their home communities from their fellow Experimenters and Group Leaders. Interestingly, many Experimenters learn as much about their home context as they do about the local communities they are visiting.

Their fellow Experimenters will be from diverse geographic, socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. While the size of each Experiment group varies, the average group consists of 14 Experimenters and two adult group leaders that travel with the group.

## OUR EXPERIMENT TEAM & GROUP LEADERS

### U.S. EXPERIMENT TEAM

*Pre-Departure:* We are here to help! Before the program departs, please feel free to contact The Experiment Admissions team with any questions you may have at [info@experiment.org](mailto:info@experiment.org) or at **1-800-345-2929**.

*On-Call (during programs):* You have been working with The Experiment's Admissions team in preparation for the summer. Once your teen has left, the Program team will be available to help you. While programs are on-going, The Experiment On-Call team operate a 24/7 on-call assistance line; they can be reached at: **1-802-258-3481** (please note that this is a different number from the phone number you have been using to communicate with the Admissions team pre-departure).

You can find our team's biographical information [here](#).

### EXPERIMENT INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

The Experiment's deep ties to local communities promote intercultural learning and communication through immersive activities that enhance language skills, empathy, flexibility, and resilience. Our extensive network of partners abroad, including educators, homestay coordinators, and local guides—collaborate with us to design each program and support our groups on the ground through their access to local services like healthcare, communication, and transportation.

### EXPERIMENT GROUP LEADERS

Experiment group leaders are your Experimenter's number one resource. Group leaders are trained, adult educators who represent our diverse student body and who are skilled in creating inclusive group environments for their participants. See [The Experimenter Handbook](#) on more information about the background of group leaders.

## Group Leader Role

Group leaders are the first point of contact for participants for questions and concerns and if they require medical care.

Before departure, group leaders participate in a week-long training that prepares them to implement successful programs. On program, group leaders will keep in close contact with our in-country partners, communicate with the U.S. Experiment office, conduct group excursions, guide the group through discussions, respond to emergency situations, and support group dynamics.

Group leaders will do their best to maximize the well-being of all Experimenters, so your group will have a meaningful and memorable learning experience. They guide Experimenters through transitions, in increasing their knowledge of the host culture, in cultivating new attitudes and awareness, and help Experimenters reflect on their experiences and how they can integrate their new learnings into their lives moving forward.

## WHO TO CONTACT

**While your participant's first point of contact is the group leader, your first point of contact is The Experiment 24/7 on-call line.**

Per protocol, if any family members/guardians contacts a group leader, they have been directed to refer family members/guardians to contact The Experiment on-call team.

### EIL On-Call Information (during program)

24-hour phone line: 802-258-3481 (urgent)

Email: [EILOnCallSupport@experiment.org](mailto:EILOnCallSupport@experiment.org) (non-urgent)

# PRE-PROGRAM



# PRE-PROGRAM: PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIMENT EXPERIENCE

It is important that you and review with your Experimenter [The Experiment Pre-Departure Information](#) and their program-specific materials on The Experiment [Planning Documents](#) page to help them prepare for travel.

## THE EXPERIMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS OVERVIEW

Each program's Planning Documents provide a holistic view of travel preparation and include the following:

1. The Experimenter Handbook
2. The Experiment Family Handbook
3. Domestic Travel Planning Guidelines with International Flight Information
4. Health Guidelines
5. Packing List
6. Personal Funds Abroad
7. The Experiment Guide to Traveling with Allergies/Intolerances
8. The Experiment Guide to Travel Vaccinations & Medications
9. Accessing International SOS Member Portal

An overview description of each of these documents are explained to Experimenters in their [Experimenter Handbook](#) and request you support your Experimenter in reviewing these documents and reaching out to us should they have any questions or concerns.

[The Experimenter Handbook](#) is an important resource and includes information and activities designed to encourage conversations between you and your Experimenter before departure. It is important that your teen prepares for the rigors of an Experiment program. Our programs are meaningful, exciting, and rewarding, but also challenging. Please support your teen through the following activities and considerations on the following topics:

- Managing Belongings
- Travel
- Personal Finance
- Communication Technologies
- Proactive Communication, Self-Advocacy
- Identity While Abroad
- Pre-Departure reflection to think through programmatic elements including Orientation, Homestay, Reflection & Re-Entry

## PROGRAM SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

*The Experiment recognizes risk as inherent in all travel, and we continually work to identify, mitigate, and manage risks within our program contexts. Our comprehensive 360-degree approach to risk management has been developed over our decades of experience providing safe learning environments abroad.*

### 360-DEGREE APPROACH TO HEALTH, SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

Our comprehensive, 360-degree approach focuses on the mental and physical well-being of participants before, during, and after the program. The Experiment has robust emergency preparedness supplies, action plans, and protocols in place, as well as detailed contingency plans. Experiment programs also have two expertly trained adult group leaders, small groups of 10-18 participants, 24-hour on-call assistance from our staff, in-country support, and more.

Living in a different country is a profound and rewarding experience. The Experiment's top priority is the safety of our participants. This priority guides our policies, our educational principals, our leader training, our program management, and our Experimenter behavior management policies.

Our biggest partners in keeping Experimenters safe on program are the Experimenters themselves. Please take the time to read all the information below. Please also review the Essential Participation Expectations in the [Pre-Departure Information webpage](#). The Essential Participation Expectations describes information on homestay and homesickness; dietary preferences; culture and policy; active participation; participant expectations and policies; group leader support with participant behavior on program; and examples of behaviors that may require intervention from The Experiment.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

While The Experiment's safety record has been exemplary over the program's 90-year history, it must be noted that anyone who ventures to a foreign country takes certain risks, and Experiment participants are no exception. The political and cultural environments in which our programs operate do come with inherent risks. To mitigate some of these risks, the Experiment implements policies, hires and trains leaders with both international and educational experience, and develops robust partnerships with in-country offices to support our programs. Families and participants are advised to review our [pre-departure planning documents](#) page for specific country and program information, as adequate individual preparation is crucial to risk management abroad. Please see our [website](#) with program descriptions and information.

# COMMUNICATION AND PERSONAL FINANCE

The common logistical questions The Experiment receives is regarding personal finances and communications. In this Handbook, we will provide an overview and encourage you to read and review in more details with Your Experimenter in [The Experiment Handbook](#) and their program's specific pre-departure [planning documents](#) (i.e. Personal Funds Abroad, Packing List)

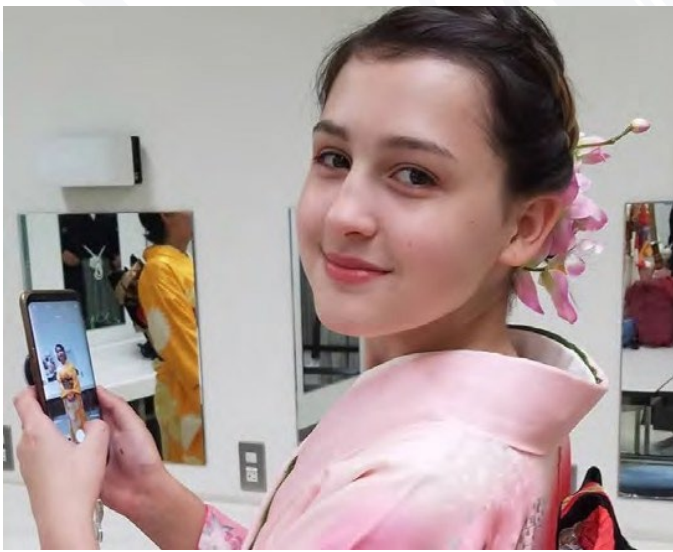
## COMMUNICATION

The Experiment encourages all participants to check in with their families once they have arrived in-country. You should expect to receive a call, email, or other message from your teen within 48 hours of the group landing in the program country. Group leaders will also let The Experiment know when the group arrives in-country at the start of the program and when all participants have departed the country at the end of the program. How often and how your teenager contacts you during their program will likely depend on the location of the program, and your individual teenager. We find that having your Experimenter call home about once a week is an appropriate balance between allowing them to be fully emerged on the program, and give you all at home periodic updates.

Make sure to discuss your expectations around communication with your teen. Generally, Experimenters who are adjusting well and not experiencing homesickness will contact home about once a week via email, Skype, WhatsApp, iMessage, Facebook Messenger, or other means. We find the more homesick a participant is the more likely they are to be in frequent contact with home, and this contact then makes the adjustment to their group or their country even harder- this results in a challenging cycle to break out of.

If you find your young person is reaching out to you daily, we ask that you encourage them to reach out to their group leaders, and consider setting a gentle challenge for them to go 48 hours without contacting home. Sometimes a little space and time can make all the difference.

While many programs have access to postal service, we discourage sending mail or care packages. In our experience mail service, especially packages, can be delayed for a variety of reasons outside our control. If you must send something to your teenager, ensure that you include tracking services, as Experiment staff will not be able to help locate lost/late packages.



# PHONES

Participants are encouraged to limit phone use during the program. It is our experience that frequent phone use by participants on Experiment programs significantly impacts the experience of the participant, including cultural adjustment and group dynamics.

We encourage you to read [this article](#) about how frequent connection to home can interfere with cultural immersion.

In addition, when you receive your Experimenter's host family information you will notice that we do not include any telephone numbers. We do this because we try to discourage telephone contact during the critical initial period of adjustment in the homestay. This may be difficult for families at home, but our experience indicates that telephone contact inhibits adjustment to the host family and new cultural environment. Therefore, we ask that you keep telephone contact with your Experimenter to a minimum during the homestay. Please remember that two trained adult group leaders, who are also supported by the local team, are always available to the participants.

That said, some participants choose to bring cell phones on their Experiment program. Our policy, much like many high schools, is that cell phones are prohibited during group or cultural activities and may be taken away from participants if they are inhibiting positive participation in activities. Participants who bring cell phones may be able to use them at times designated by their group leaders but parents should not expect to be able to reach participants at all times on cell phones. Additionally, cell phone use in country is likely to be very expensive so please consider this if you intend to communicate with your Experimenter via cell phone. Finally, group leaders and Experiment staff are not able to troubleshoot cell phone issues, including loss or damage, should they occur in-country.

# MONEY ABROAD

Our most frequent call from families during the summer is to report that Experimenters can't access money in-country. Here are some tips to make sure that your participant can access money throughout the Experiment program:

When Experimenters are unable to access money while on program, it is most likely not an emergency. Food, accommodations, and other essentials (i.e. first aid) are always provided, so you don't have to worry that there is any threat posed to those who cannot immediately access personal money.

- It is important to remember that in most countries, use of credit cards is not as common as in the U.S. Accessing cash is necessary. For participants to access cash abroad, we recommend bringing an ATM card. You will need one in the participant's name, with direct access to an account with funds, and a PIN number. In addition to making sure your participant knows the PIN number, write down the PIN number to keep a record at home. Experimenters regularly forget their PIN numbers.
- Before program begins, call the bank, and let them know the dates and locations of your Experimenters program.
- Carrying cash to exchange is not recommended but you may choose to send your teenager with some cash as back-up. However, you should not plan for them to rely on cash alone. We recommend no more than \$100 USD in back-up cash, if any. Exchange places will NOT accept bills before the 2003 series or old or damaged bills, so bring crisp bills.
- Do not send your teenager with traveler's checks and do not plan on wiring money.
- It is okay to send a credit card as a backup, but it is most important that participants are able to access cash with their debit card.
- Money matters are personal, so please discuss expectations and the need to budget week-by-week with your teenager before the summer. Your teenager must, however, have some personal money. The Experiment recommends participants bring \$100 in cash and have access to \$300 - \$600 USD via an ATM card.

You can find detailed country specific information in the Personal Funds Abroad document on The Experiment pre-departure [Planning Documents webpage](#).

**DURING THE PROGRAM**



# DURING THE PROGRAM

## HOW TO REACH THE EXPERIMENT

The Experiment's risk management protocols are multi-faceted and comprehensive. While Experiment programs are in country, "on-call" staff members are available 24/7 through our on-call line, either directly or through our after-hours answering service. This number is used by group leaders, partner offices, and families to report emergencies and relay information, and therefore should only be used for genuinely urgent issues.

**During Business Hours (EDT):** The Experiment business hours are 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EDT, Monday through Fridays. Examples of appropriate business hours calls:

- Participant inability to access money (lost ATM card, ATM/credit card not working)
- Family has not heard from participant recently
- Question about general living conditions. Remember that countries have different living standards.

**After Business Hours:** Non-business hours are 5:00 pm to 9:00 am EDT workdays, all weekends, and federal holidays. During non-business hours, dialing our main on-call assistance phone line (1-802-258-3481) will connect you with our answering service. The answering service will gather initial information and connect you with the on-call staff member. It is likely you will never need to use the 24-hour contact system, but please know that it exists to provide you support if necessary. Calling after-hours is reserved for urgent communication; if you have a non-urgent message, please contact The Experiment during business hours.

Examples of appropriate after-hours calls:

- Family emergency
- Urgent medical issue reported by your teenager and you have not heard from The Experiment
- Significant homestay concern (i.e. inappropriate living situation)

## Participant Alerts

When circumstances warrant, The Experiment will activate its emergency response system. If political situations, severe weather, or other conditions or events require a change in scheduled itinerary or the repatriation of Experiment participants, we will contact families of potentially affected participants, either by phone and/or email. In the unlikely case of a group being repatriated, The Experiment will also post this news on our website, [www.experiment.org](http://www.experiment.org).

## EXPERIMENT GROUP LEADERS: YOUR TEEN'S BEST RESOURCES

As previously mentioned, group leaders are the primary resource for Experimenters in-country. We expect that any issue with the homestay, group dynamics, or cultural adjustment should be discussed between the participant and group leader before involving family at home, in-country partners, or U.S. Experiment on-call and administrative staff.

The first question our staff will ask a parent or guardian calling about a participant issue is: "Has your Experimenter discussed the issue with their group leader?" While following up with leaders, our on-call staff will ask that you also talk with your Experimenter about reaching out to their leader. The leaders are your Experimenter's best possible resource, the more you can help your Experimenter to communicate with the leader, the faster we are able to help.

**To reiterate, while your participant's first point of contact is the group leader, your first point of contact is The Experiment 24/7 on-call line.**

Per protocol, if any family members/guardians contacts a group leader, they have been directed to refer family members/guardians to contact The Experiment on-call team.

#### EIL On-Call Information (during program)

24-hour phone line: 802-258-3481 (urgent)

Email: [EILOnCallSupport@experiment.org](mailto:EILOnCallSupport@experiment.org) (non-urgent)

Participants, parents, and group leaders have access to The Experiment's on call line, which is staffed by our professional team 24 hours per day 7 days per week during programs. Participants should access this phone number should they have any concerns on program that cannot be addressed by a group leader or the in-country partner.

## WORLD LEARNING CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING LINE

The Experiment and World Learning have a confidential reporting line (contact information below) that participants and group leaders can use during programs.

This 1-800 line is confidential and reported incidents are only shared with World Learning senior leadership.

Should a member of our team need to know, the senior staff member will alert the most senior member of The Experiment team, who will follow up on the incident appropriately and with sensitivity.

- Website: [www.lighthouse-services.com/worldlearning](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/worldlearning)
- English speaking USA and Canada: 833-400-0039
- Spanish speaking USA and Canada: 800-216-1288
- French speaking Canada: 855-725-0002
- Spanish speaking Mexico: 01-800-681-5340
- AT&T USADirect
- All other countries: 800-603-2869 (must dial country access code first click here for access codes and dialing instructions)
- Email: [reports@lighthouse-services.com](mailto:reports@lighthouse-services.com) (must include company name with report)

# CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

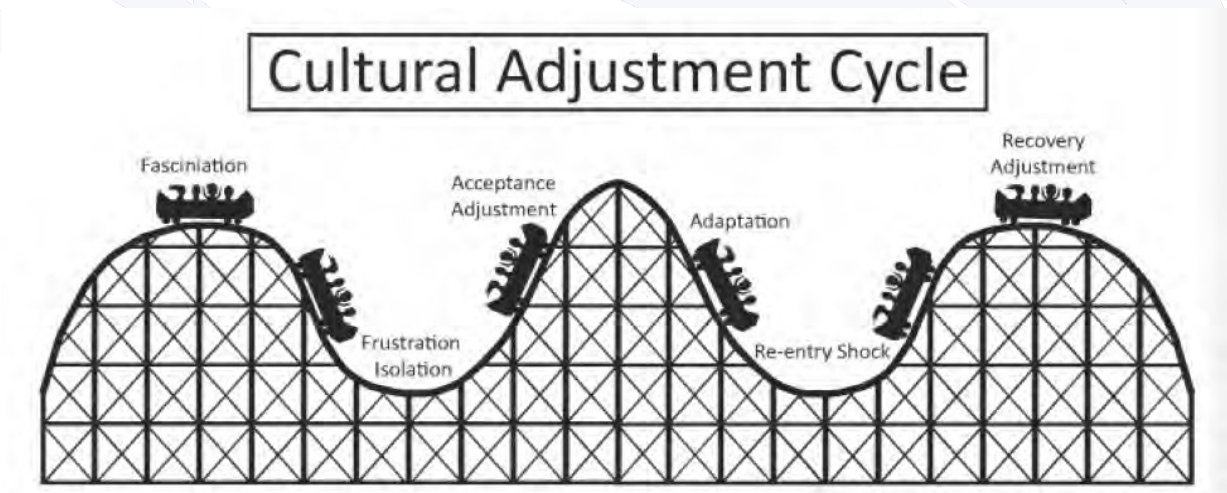
# CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Your teenager will soon be immersed in their Experiment program, and you are probably wondering how they will adjust to the new environment. Experimenters often go through a predictable five-step cultural-adjustment curve:

1. Initial Excitement – honeymoon phase
2. Culture Shock – stress of initial adjustment
3. Surface Adjustment – coming to terms with differences
4. Unresolved Issues – recognizing certain deeper adjustment/integration issues
5. Feeling at Home – attaining a level of comfort and acceptance

During the “honeymoon phase,” which usually occurs during orientation, everything is new and exciting. Once the homestay begins, your teenager may experience an initial culture shock. When meeting their host family for the first time and facing cultural differences, your teenager may have questions about how to relate to their new environment. Fortunately, this period is short-lived, and soon your teenager is making a surface adjustment—the unknowns begin to make sense. Generally, this surface adjustment is followed by a slight downward curve where minor challenges with host family and friends may surface. Finally, all the varied emotional ups and downs are replaced by a sense of feeling at home. Your teenager now accepts their new culture as just another way of living—accepting and understanding the differences.

If your teen calls home expressing anxiety, please remember that “this too shall pass.” Your Experimenter is probably experiencing culture shock that will soon be replaced by a feeling of comfort and ease with their present surroundings. Encourage your teenager to reach out to the group leaders if they need advice, reassurance, or support. Like the more than 75,000 Experimenters who have participated in our programs, we hope your Experimenter will make the most of this outstanding opportunity to enrich their outlook on the world.



## PREPARING FOR THE HOMESTAY

Almost all Experimenters report being the most nervous about the homestay. They also say that it is the most rewarding part of the program. If your Experimenter has similar feelings, preparation is key. There are activities and questions for your Experimenter to consider in the Experimenter Handbook.

You may also take some time to discuss the following questions:

- How would you want a host sibling to introduce themselves? How would you like to introduce yourself to your family? What activities would you like to do with your host family?
- What would you do if the family doesn't immediately initiate an activity? How can you help “break the ice”?

- What activities would you like to share with the family?
- How are you feeling about the homestay in general?

Homestay representatives are currently placing your Experimenter with a host family. To find the best possible match, these placements often take time. Thus, final placements are not usually confirmed until mid-to-late June. After your teen's departure, and before the homestay segment begins, we will send you the name and address of the host family that your Experimenter will be staying with during the program. This will be the last piece of information you receive from The Experiment at the beginning of the program.

## HOMESTAY AND HOMESICKNESS

It is common for Experimenters to experience homesickness during key stages of the program, especially during the homestay. The first few days of the homestay can be challenging as participants adjust to a new schedule and family life. This part of the program is intended for participants to really immerse themselves in another culture, way of living, and way of communicating. This new experience can be one of the most challenging and one of the most rewarding aspects of the program. Experimenters will experience highs and lows during this stage. Please know that Experiment group leaders are there to support your teen throughout this process of adjustment. We have found that less communication to and from home helps Experimenters to adjust and be fully present during this part of the program.

### Frequent Experimenter Phone Calls

Over the 90-year history of The Experiment, we have found that a few issues can come up during the phases of cultural adjustment that cause anxiety for families at home. Below is a short list of "Frequent Summer Calls" and some tips on responding to them.

**"I can't access money."** – This is the most frequent communication we receive from families during the summer. Please remember that inability to access money is not an emergency (although it may seem like it to your teenager!) The best way to troubleshoot this is to call your bank and ask for their assistance. They should be able to tell you whether the card is functioning properly.

**"I'm sad/not having fun/missing home."** – This call can come in many forms but generally results from the "cultural shock" emotional stage of the adjustment curve. Please encourage your Experimenter to reach out to group leaders, to participate in all activities, and to hang in there! This phase almost always passes quickly and participants go on to enjoy the program. You may want to consider limiting communication, as talking with parents or friends from home often makes homesickness worse.

**"My host family isn't what I expected."** – Common homestay issues arise because host families are different from Experimenters' home families. Remind your teenager that all families are different and The Experiment matched him or her carefully based upon their application essay. Encourage your teenager to try to engage with the family by initiating conversation, offering to cook a meal or a favorite recipe, showing them pictures from home, or just going for a walk together.

## IDENTITY WHILE ABROAD

Group diversity is a critical component to Experiment programs. You can read more about our approach to diversity, equity and inclusion [here](#).

Experimenters are high school students of different races, religions, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Experiment actively seeks to engage and enroll participants from a diverse array of backgrounds—from across the U.S. and abroad. Experiment groups represent a range of backgrounds: small towns and large cities; urban and rural areas; and public, private, and home-school educational experiences.



In navigating our varying experiences when traveling or living abroad, it is important to recognize the role of identity in shaping those experiences. Some of the most common social identities include:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Ability
- Religion/spirituality
- Nationality
- Socioeconomic status

Experimenters abroad face a new cultural context that includes different historical and cultural understandings and lenses on social identities. Customs, beliefs, laws, facilities, and social practices are likely different than in your home country. When traveling abroad, the ways your teen identifies themselves at home may have a different context in their host country and they may encounter stereotypes, questions, and curiosity surrounding their identities.

Depending on where they go, they may be redefining or shaping what a person from their home country is for some people, so we request your support in preparing your teen to prepare for cultural and societal differences around identity. Aspects of their identity that feel salient, or most notable, in their home community may not feel as prominent in other countries or cultures. They may be surprised that in many countries, others perceive their most salient identity to be their national identity as opposed to other identities they hold. Or perhaps their salient identities feel magnified when abroad. Or maybe they will experience a mix of both of these perceptions.

What an individual feels and experiences may be different than how others perceive their identity and what the others doing the perceiving are feeling and experiencing. There are many layers to how they understand their own identity, how they understand others' understanding of their identity, and how others understand or perceive their identity.

Some Experimenters may have the experience of being in the minority for the first time, whereas others may be a minority in their home country or in different aspects of their identity. Furthermore, some may find themselves as part of the visible majority for the first time, yet their internal experience differs from their outward experience (e.g a Korean American student going to Korea and being perceived as a local). These experiences regarding identity look different for each Experimenter.

Experimenters should consider how they may be perceived in their host country, as their host country may have a different lens or understanding of social identities. Remember that their host country has a different context, culture, and history that we should respect as visitors. Exploring and understanding these differences will lead to greater cultural understanding and exchange.

Encouraging your Experimenter in preparing and familiarizing themselves with various issues that might impact their experience in their host country will help them to not only more smoothly integrate, it will deepen their understanding of the host country. We encourage you to support them in learning as much as possible about the cultural, social, and political landscape in their destination site before departing and taking advantage of the activities and resources listed in [The Experimenter Handbook](#).

# AFTER THE PROGRAM

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At the end of the program, group leaders facilitate reflective discussions on the group learning experience and hold sessions to prepare your Experimenter for returning home.

When your teen returns, you may notice a difference in their thinking and perspective. They may also experience reverse culture shock (see more details in [The Experimenter Handbook](#)) Encourage your Experimenter to share their story with family members and friends. We have learned that when Experimenters reflect on and communicate what they've learned, their experience returning home becomes easier. We also invite your Experimenter to share photos with us. If you or your Experimenter would like advice on sharing their story after the program, please let us know.

After the program, you and your teen will also be invited to participate in The Experiment's re-entry workshops this fall, both in person (select areas) and online. At these workshops, you and your teen will have the opportunity to share your experiences with other Experimenters, leaders, and staff members, as well as brainstorm ways to bring your experiences back to your everyday life at home.

There are also many study abroad resources available online to help support your Experimenter, particularly the Parent Re-Entry Handbook and reflective activities in [The Experimenter Handbook](#).

## STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THE EXPERIMENT AND WORLD LEARNING

We want to give your Experimenter the opportunity to continue to develop connections at home. Their participation in The Experiment opens up a network of over 100,000 World Learning alumni from over 140 countries!

The World Learning alumni network is a 90-year old resource for continual learning and global networking. For example, did you know that the World Learning family includes:

- [World Learning](#): Impacting people in more than 150 countries, World Learning is a global nonprofit working to create a more peaceful and just world through education, sustainable development, and exchange.
- [SIT Study Abroad](#): Providing more than 80 immersive summer and semester-long study abroad programs for undergraduates on seven continents. providing more than 80 immersive summer and semester-long study abroad programs for undergraduates on seven continents.
- [SIT Graduate Institute](#): Experiential and global master's degree programs focused on some of the world's most pressing issues.

One thing these programs all have in common is the development of future leaders. As a member of the World Learning family, they will be eligible for The Advancing Leaders Fellowship. This program trains emerging leaders to make real change in their communities through social innovation. Fellows are selected through a competitive application process and have an opportunity to receive funding for their community projects.

As an Experimenter, they will be an alum of the World Learning family. We hope that you will consider one of our other international programs in the future.

# GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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Participating in a challenging program alongside fellow Experiment participants and group leaders offers a highly rewarding experience that can generate lifelong memories and friendships. This experience must have policies in place to protect the safety and well-being of the participants, leaders, partner office personnel, the environment, and the host culture.

The Experiment has implemented policies (which are stated in the [Conditions of Participation](#)) to provide guidance on those boundaries. When your family enrolled with the Experiment, your Experimenter as well as a parent/guardian signed the Conditions of Participation, agreeing to be beholden to the Experiment policies. When a participant is not able to follow Experiment policies, group leaders have an obligation to intervene on behalf of the organization, group, or individuals.

Certain behaviors will be managed in the field, while other conduct will require a response that extends beyond what is possible in the field.

These guidelines and policies have been developed based on our experience with World Learning programs through the years. We always keep in mind Experimenters' welfare, families' expectations of the program, and our educational goals. We expect Experimenters to adhere to these guidelines. The group leaders may modify these guidelines in order to adapt to elements of the host culture or for special circumstances.

**During orientation**, when your Experimenter and their group, and possibly other Experiment groups, are at a hotel or hostel: The group leaders and any in-country staff establish policies and guidelines in keeping with the host culture.

**During the homestay, language study and/or thematic component**, policies and guidelines are set by the host family, in-country staff, and group leaders and will be in keeping with the laws of the host country and in alignment with The Experiment policies.

**During city stays, trips/excursions, and other times in public accommodations:**

- During the day, Experimenters must be in a group of three or more at all times.
- During evening hours, Experimenters must be with a group leader. The group leader may set a curfew if they feel a particular situation warrants doing so.

## POLICIES

It is important to review all The Experiment policies with your teen on the [policies website page](#).

Below is a list of The Experiment's institutional policies and procedures that are available online.

- Alcohol & Drug Policy
- Online & Social Media Policy
- Water Policy
- Homestay Expectations
- COVID-19 Risk Management Protocols
- Harassment Policy

## GENERAL RULES

**Experimenters are responsible for their own behavior.**

The Experiment's Essential Participation Expectations (listed on the [Pre-Departure Information webpage](#)) and the Conditions of Participation have been established for Experimenters and are appropriate for their summer experience. However, their conduct must also be consistent with, and respectful of, what is expected by host families and others in the program's host country.



The Experiment group itself is diverse, so each member’s conduct must be sensitive to, and respectful of, all others in the group. Experimenters’ conduct must reflect favorably on World Learning as an international educational organization, which has emphasized cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity, and respect around the world for 90years.

The following activities are prohibited for reasons relating to safety, health, and legal liability:

- Hitchhiking
- Driving any motorized vehicle
- Parachuting
- Bungee jumping
- Hang-gliding
- Riding in private airplanes
- Rock climbing
- Base jumping
- Bridge/cliff jumping
- Branding
- Tattooing
- Surfing
- Scuba diving
- Possession or use of firearms

World Learning prohibits Experimenters from participating in, attending, or otherwise engaging in political protests, rallies, demonstrations, or acts of civil disobedience at any time while on the program. Experimenters may not use any alcohol or drugs of any kind, including smoking (tobacco, vaping, hookah, etc.). Experimenters may not operate or ride on any two-wheeled motor driven vehicle (e.g., motorcycle, moped, motorized or electric scooter, motorcycle taxi, etc.) or other kinds of recreational motorized transports, except where the transportation is operated by a third-party service provider engaged by The Experiment for group activities. In addition, Experimenters are not permitted to engage in any and all challenges, games, dares, etc. which could be dangerous to health and safety, including but not limited to food or beverage consumption challenges like the cinnamon and similar challenges, asphyxiation games like the choking game or pass-out challenge, and escalating truth or dare scenarios like the blue whale challenge. Engaging in these behaviors may lead to dismissal from the program.

Please also see the Conditions of Participation that follows and refer to the Essential Participation Expectations (listed on the [Pre-Departure Information](#) webpage) for more on the subject of inappropriate behavior that could lead to dismissal.

## THE EXPERIMENT’S CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION AND PROCEDURES

While enrolled in any Experiment program, Experimenters are, at all times, representatives of the United States or their home country, and The Experiment, and must abide by the following Conditions of Participation and all other policies for the duration of the program. As a result, anyone enrolled in the program who engages in conduct unbecoming an Experimenter will be violating this code and will be subject to appropriate review and disciplinary sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the program.

Experimenters and their families must acknowledge and accept that The Experiment has the authority, at all times, to establish rules of conduct necessary for the operation of the program, which includes Experimenters’ free time. You must also agree to accept the disciplinary action deemed appropriate by The Experiment, which may include dismissal from the program.

The Experiment follows a policy of progressive discipline including, but not limited to: verbal warnings, revoking privileges, phone/email correspondence with families, written behavior contracts, and dismissal from program. The Experiment has zero tolerance for illegal and/or unprescribed drugs. In the event of use of illegal and/or unprescribed drugs, an Experimenter will be dismissed from the program



## Advancing Leadership for 90 Years

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