



Superintendent's
Circular

School Year 2019-2020

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GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR HOMESTAYS

This Superintendent's Circular provides instructions for implementing policies relating to BPS Sponsored field trips passed by the Boston School Committee on November 6, 2019.

This circular **MUST be read in its entirety** by Program Leaders (chaperones), **Principals/Headmasters (and/or the District Department sponsoring the** international program that includes a homestay component, or coordinating the hosting of international students in Boston. **These parties are responsible for ensuring that all field trip policies, and procedures as outlined in this circular, and all of the field trip Circulars are adhered to.**

Overview

Homestays can be an important part of the travel experience. They afford students the opportunity to build relationships, and immerse themselves in the culture and country they are visiting. Homestays also give students an opportunity to share their background and experiences with their host families, and are often the highlight of students' travel experience; many students maintain relationships with their host families well beyond their programs.

While the benefits of homestays are immeasurable, the safety of all participants is first and foremost. To manage risk, host families and homes must be continually reviewed to ensure that host families are prepared to welcome guests, and assume the responsibilities of what it means to be a host family. Students must also be prepared to be responsible guests when staying with others.

It is important for Program Leaders to:

- Determine why, and if a homestay component is necessary for the program, and what value it will add in helping to meet the program's learning outcomes. Research the specific location in which you'd like to create homestays for your students.
- Decide if they will be self-coordinating the homestays, or if they will partner with an Affiliate or Partner Organization. If Program Leaders choose to partner with an organization or in-country affiliate, identify that organization as early as possible. Consult the Department of Global Education to inform your decision when choosing a provider/affiliate.
- Complete the corresponding field trip application, in addition to any required Homestay documents.

All homestays must be thoroughly reviewed before allowing a student to be placed with a homestay family in Boston or abroad. **This process must be adhered to for all outgoing and incoming homestay programs.**

Host Family Checks (Boston & Abroad)

Forms: Host Family Agreement; Host Family Application; Affiliate Process for Homestay/Host Family Reviews

1. All BPS families (anyone in household 18 or over) who host national, or international guests must be CORI/SORI cleared by the BPS Office of Human Capital. Interested families should complete the **Homestay Application (Affiliates may use their own form; however, it should be shared with the BPS Program Leader, and address the criteria on the BPS form)** by a date specified by the Program Leader.
2. For homestays abroad, if a certified credential check cannot be met due to the infrastructure or policies of country/region visited, then **an official letter must be received by the BPS program leader from the Affiliate, or community host leader certifying that they have done their due diligence in conducting a thorough personal background investigation, and can vouch for a families stability in hosting a student.** *****NEW:** In the case where an official background check cannot occur abroad, students are only allowed to stay in those households in pairs of two or more, unless the BPS family requests and authorizes in writing that their child be allowed to stay with the host family alone.
3. All families must review, complete, and sign the **Host Family Agreement** in addition to the Boston Public School **Host Family Application**. The **Host Family Agreement** form details that host families understand their role and responsibility as hosts, as well as the safety protocols required of them by BPS for homestays.
4. Determine how many homestay families are needed. Identify multiple back-up families as well as families who can accommodate more than one student. *****NEW:** If two students are staying together, they shall be of the same gender. Identify families that are prepared to host a student with physical disabilities, food allergies, and/or medical/behavioral health concerns. *****NEW:** Homestay sites must be within 20 minutes travel time of the Program Leader's accommodations.

Homestay Site Visits (Boston & Abroad)

Forms: Homestay/Host Family Site Visit Checklist; Affiliate Process for Homestay/Host Family Reviews; Finalized Homestay List

5. **Site Visits:** Homestay site visits are required for all programs. The Program Leader, or the in-country Affiliate/Partner Organization, must complete a site visit to each homestay family (in Boston or abroad), and complete the **BPS Homestay Site Visit Checklist**. In cases where BPS staff are not completing the site visit abroad, the Affiliate or Partner Organization must be provided a copy of the **BPS Homestay Site Visit Checklist** (or their own with the same BPS criteria) to complete and submit to the BPS Program Leader in advance of departure.

6. *****NEW Site Handover:** Once on site abroad, Program Leaders and chaperones are required to escort each student group to the house they will be staying, and verify that students feel comfortable and welcome in their houses. BPS Staff must certify that all the students were properly set up in their homes, the house rules were discussed with the adults, the medical and dietary requirements were reviewed, and the house matches the expectations. BPS Staff shall ask for a tour of the home, and refer to, and take notes on the site visit checklist to confirm the information provided by the Affiliate/Partner Organization. If BPS does not agree that the home provides a reasonable context for the student group, then an incident report shall be filed and submitted to the Department of Global Education. Alternative accommodations shall be secured, according to the situation. All chaperones must maintain copies of the Homestay List to know where all students have been assigned.]

Safety and Communication (Abroad)

Forms: Student Expectations; Parental Homestay Waiver; Home Stay Review- Verification Form

7. **Communication:** Safety and emergency protocols are an important aspect of all homestay assignments. Homestay hosts, students, and affiliates all need to be aware of the BPS safety procedures. The Program Leader is the primary point of contact, with additional chaperones as secondary points of contact. In case of an emergency, the Program Leader should be contacted to assist in assessing and resolving the emergency. *****NEW** Program Leaders must ensure that each student group has a local cell phone to serve as a direct line of communication between students and staff/traveling faculty, OR means via their own devices to communicate locally. The Program Leader is responsible for notifying the Department of Global Education should an issue arise during a homestay program.]
8. **Immunizations:** For **International Students visiting Boston**, BPS Program Leaders must note, and verify immunization requirements for those visiting us from abroad prior to hosting them in Boston. BPS Program Leaders must work with the Program Leader chaperone from visiting schools to ensure all health regulations are met. See attached letter for directives from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/immunization/immunization-requirements-exchange-and-visiting-students.pdf>
9. **Student Expectations:** Program Leaders are to clearly communicate with BPS students what it means to live with a host family, what will be expected of them within the homestay environment, how to be respectful guests, and how to communicate in case of an emergency. Share the **Student Expectations** form with participating students.
10. *****NEW Debriefs:** Program Leaders and chaperones must conduct daily homestay specific check ins with each group at each location. Events reported during these debriefs require filing of incident reports to Department of Global

Education, with actions taken dependent on the nature of the incident. The Program Leader is responsible for creating a formalized mechanism for students to provide information about the homestay experience.]

11. **Contingency Housing Plan: All programs (Boston and Abroad) must have sufficient back-up homestay arrangements in the event that any homestay arrangements fall through, or are not cleared for hosting.** Homestays should be willing to host additional students if needed, homestay families on call, and/or affiliate leaders will serve as homestay providers if needed. Program Leaders should identify non-homestay accommodations as a back-up plan.
12. *****NEW Informed Consent:** In a meeting at least two months prior to departure, Program Leaders must clearly state to all families of BPS students planning to undergo a homestay, that while they gathered, and provided participants with a significant amount of information about the international host families, they are not able to conduct official background checks, and is relying on information provided by the Affiliate/ Partner Organization, or other outside party. Program Leaders must make clear that they will not be supervising the students while they are with host families, and that participation in the program is voluntary. The Program Leader must provide each BPS family with plans regarding the following:
 - a. When and how often Program Leaders will check in with their child, and how their child can contact Program Leaders in the event of an emergency or sensitive need.
 - b. How parents can contact their child during the homestay.
 - c. Transportation information related to travel to and from field trip activities, and host family's residence.
 - d. A backup plan in the event their child can no longer stay with the assigned host family.
 - e. The location, and proximity of Program Leaders to the homestay residence.
 - f. The number of BPS students also participating in the homestay at the same residence. *Remember that parents must be informed of the number of BPS students that will also be residing with the host family, and provide written authorization for their child to be the only BPS student in the host residence.

Program Leaders should request a Parental Homestay Waiver for their specific program with the above information (Step 11) in writing from the Department of Global Education at least two months in advance of departure.]

Filing and Record Keeping

All original forms must be kept by the Program Leader at the school. These forms must be kept on file for the current fiscal year, plus three additional years after the homestay has occurred. Completed original forms must travel with the BPS Program Leader while abroad, copies must be carried by other BPS chaperones, and copies must be left with the principal/headmaster.

Submit copies of the following forms to the BPS Department of Global Education at least 2 months prior to the beginning of the program:

- *Home Stay Review- Verification Form*
- *Host Family Agreement*
- *Finalized Home-Stay List*
- *Affiliate Forms (and/or Letter from Affiliate/Partner Organization)*

Host Family Site Visit Checklist

All host families are required to undergo a home site visit to ensure a safe environment for the international student. Program Leaders, or affiliates, should utilize this form when conducting a host family site visit. All BPS host families **must** be visited, and the following checklist verified by the Program Leader. If working with an affiliate organization, the organization may utilize its own form (provided it answers the questions below) and affix to this document to be submitted to the Department of Global Education. Homestays vary; the notes section provides an opportunity to explain how even in the most basic living conditions, the program has planned carefully to manage risk.

Bedroom	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Single Room <i>(In the case of a shared room, both students must be of the same gender, and within 3 years of age of one another. International students may not share a room with a student who is older than 18 years of age regardless of the difference in age.)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bed with linens, pillow, blanket(s)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Closet</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Study Area</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dresser</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Desk and Lamp</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Door with Lock</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (note below): _____</p>
Bathroom	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Private</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Shared (note with whom): _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Type of shower (<input type="checkbox"/> Tub <input type="checkbox"/> Stall)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Anti-slip mat or similar in shower/tub</p>
Kitchen	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen appears safe (knives and cutting utensils are kept in appropriate casing drawers)</p>
Smoke	<p><input type="checkbox"/> There are no smokers in the house</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> There are smokers in the house (note below who, and where they smoke): _____</p>
Pets	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Dog: Number <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor <input type="checkbox"/> Caged <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cat: Number <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor <input type="checkbox"/> Caged <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (note below): _____</p> <p>Number <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor <input type="checkbox"/> Caged <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Number <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor <input type="checkbox"/> Caged <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Amenities	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Pool: Indoor _____ Outdoor _____ Depth _____ Fenced _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Boat <input type="checkbox"/> Access to other water (lake, river, canal, pond) indicate here if access is separated by fence _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Balcony: Height _____ (if in high rise, indicate if enclosed _____ or open _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> WiFi <input type="checkbox"/> Gymnasium or access to gym facilities on premises <input type="checkbox"/> Other amenities: _____
General Safety and Security	<input type="checkbox"/> Exterior door locks <input type="checkbox"/> Firearms (indicate here where stored, and if locked _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol is out of sight or locked <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke detectors (note where, and how many _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Home Alarm System
Other:	Please indicate observations other than those above:

[*NEW: Copies of valid Automobile Insurance with valid expiry date of all drivers in the household has been reviewed by, or submitted to the BPS staff conducting the Site Visit.]**

_____ Yes _____ No

Name of BPS Staff Conducting Inspection

Role of BPS Staff Conducting Inspection

Signature of BPS Staff Conducting Inspection

Date _____

Host Family Member Present During Inspection

Role in Family

Date

Host Family Member Present During Inspection

Role in Family

Date

Host Family Member Present During Inspection

Role in Family

Date

Host Family Agreement & Code of Conduct

To be completed by BPS families hosting international students, and shared with international Affiliates/ Partner Organizations hosting BPS students abroad.

We understand that by signing below, we agree to the following:

1. Have completed a CORI clearing check (for U.S. hosts), or a security/government clearance/vetting process (international hosts). *****NEW:** We will notify the BPS Program Leader of any changes in our physical residence, or members residing permanently or occasionally at our home not previously noted on our initial application.
2. Students will be supervised and cared for as outlined by the BPS Host Family Policy.
3. Our family will engage with our host student regularly by sharing our culture, customs, traditions, and expectations openly.
4. We will do our best to make sure host students are comfortable in our home, that they understand the household culture, and may address any concerns or issues they may have
5. We will encourage students to engage, and be involved with our family activities, outings, sporting events, to discover and experience our culture first-hand.
6. We will provide meals for students (if applicable), even if the meal falls outside of our regular meal times.
7. We will ask any questions in advance of receiving our guests if we are unsure of the expectations required from us as hosts.
8. **Student safety is the highest priority.** Students will always have access to a phone or other technology through which they can contact the BPS Program Leader. We understand this is essential to the safety protocols of this program.
9. Students' itineraries may change, and we agree to be flexible with regard to their travel schedule.
10. We will support students in arriving to all program activities on time.
11. We will respect the BPS program itinerary with regard to students' wake-up and lights-out time recommendations.
12. **We must share any questions/concerns we have with the Program Leader immediately and throughout the duration of the program.**

*****NEW:** Host Family Code of Conduct:

As a host family for Boston Public Schools, you are held to a high standard. At Boston Public Schools, we support and endorse a strict policy of respect towards students and expect our Host Families to act at all times as adult role models. Students typically respond better and display greater levels of respect when appropriate expectations are established from the beginning of the homestay. Therefore, you should ensure that you do not engage in any interaction or communication that may reflect the appearance of impropriety or make your student feel uncomfortable in your presence. If you are not sure whether a particular comment, or action may be appropriate, it is far better to avoid the behavior.

*****NEW:** The following are examples of inappropriate interactions and communications with students. This list is not all inclusive and other, similar activities should also be avoided:

- Encouraging or allowing your student to call you or others by an inappropriate nickname;
- Touching or allowing others to touch your student or his/her clothing in non-professional ways or inappropriate places, or touching or allowing others to touch your student with aggression, in frustration, or when emotions are high;
- Yelling or abusive action toward your student by you or anyone else;
- Speaking or allowing others to speak with innuendo to suggest a relationship or sexual subjects;
- Flirting;
- Encouraging or permitting your student to engage in such behavior as sitting on laps, hugging, or touching private areas with you or others;
- Making or permitting others to make inappropriate sexual, racial/or ethnic comments/jokes;
- Entering rooms or areas or allowing others to do so, intended for privacy when others are present (e.g. bathroom or closed bedrooms);
- Dating or engaging in consensual relationships with your student or encouraging, requesting, implying or suggesting such relationships with family members or visitors; and
- Any behavior that would be considered to cross boundaries for appropriate behavior between minors and adults, or appropriate behavior between “siblings” or others sharing living accommodations]

*****NEW:** In addition, you should not allow others to physically move, grab, or touch your host student, or grab something from your student, with aggression or because of frustration. It is important to watch for, and address any inappropriate interaction or communication between other children/teenagers in the household and your student. For example, it is not appropriate for the student and any of the children/teenagers in the household to date, flirt, sit on laps, touch private parts. Nor is it appropriate for the student to be behind closed doors with a member of the opposite sex at any time. Harassment and bullying are inappropriate and must be immediately addressed. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, and other verbal, graphic, or offensive conduct relating to race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, disability, and/or language-accent. Harassment also includes sexual conduct. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, physical or verbal aggression (hitting, kicking, taunting, teasing, threatening, ridiculing, etc.), relational aggression (teasing, threatening, intimidating others) and cyber-bullying (creating websites, texting, emails, snap-chatting, tweeting, storying, using camera phones, or other forms of technology to engage in harassment or bullying).]

Name of Head of Household: (printed _____)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(While the head of the household is the primary signatory, his/her signature indicates that all family members in the household understand and agree to the agreements above.)

Affiliate Process for Homestay/ Host Family Reviews

This form is to be completed by Affiliate or Partner Organizations responsible for organizing the international Homestay of BPS students. This form is to be submitted to the BPS Program Leader, and Department of Global Education. A signed letter from the Affiliate or Partner Organization that includes all of the information below is acceptable.

Name of Organization:

Contact Person:

Title of Contact Person:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

- 1) What is your host family application process?

- 2) How do you review families?

- 3) How do you prepare families for the responsibilities of hosting?

- 4) Detail your host family site visit process:

- 5) What agency if any do you use to review the background/credentials of host families?
(Attach documentation verifying you completed this process on families.)

Affiliate Program Lead (Printed)

Affiliate Program Lead (Signature)

Date _____

Host Family Application

*This form is for BPS families interested in hosting an international student. We **require that all hosts are CORI cleared**, and that you complete this homestay application as detailed as possible, and review our **Host Family Agreements** form in advance of submitting your application.*

Family Information

Head(s) of Household:

_____ & _____

Address:

Phone

Number(s): _____ & _____

Email Address(es):

_____ & _____

List all persons residing in the home full or part-time (including head(s) of household)

Name	D.O.B	Gender	Relationship	Occupation/School

Criminal Background Check: *NEW**

Hosts acknowledge that the adults (18 and older) listed above will be required to undergo a standard criminal background check process (including fingerprint check) and confirmation of automobile insurance with coverage acceptable to Boston Public Schools prior to the arrival of an international student. If an adult subsequently takes up residence in the household (whether full-time or on a sporadic or occasional basis), the adult will also require a criminal background check (including fingerprint check). It is the responsibility of the host family to notify the BPS Program Leader within 24 hours that there is another resident in the home. In addition, the host family must report any arrests, or changes to any resident's criminal background to the school's Program Leader within 24 hours of the occurrence so that the situation can be assessed, and next steps implemented, which may include the removal of the student from the home.

Hosting Information

Has your family ever hosted an international student? Yes No If yes, when?

If Yes, for which organization: _____

How was that experience for you and your family? _____

Why would you like to host a student?

What is the primary language spoken in your household?

What other languages are spoken in your household?

Hobbies/Activities

What activities is your family interested in?

What are you most excited or proud to share about your city/town, school or home with an exchange student?

Host Family Profile Information

Do any household members smoke? Yes No

Are there any pets in the home? Yes No List all pets:

Will the student share a room? Yes No If Yes, with whom?

Describe the exchange student's sleeping arrangement:

Will at least one parent/guardian of the host student be home each of the evenings during the exchange student's stay? If the answer is "no," please identify who will be supervising the exchange student (name, gender, age, relationship to family) and when:

List specific household customs and values, including religious traditions, dietary restrictions, etc.:

References: Please provide the information for two non- relative references:

Reference 1:

Name _____

Relationship to Family:

Phone Number _____

Email Address: _____

Reference 2:

Name _____

Relationship to Family:

Phone Number _____

Email Address: _____

Certification

I hereby certify that the above information is accurate to the best of my knowledge, and agree to comply with BPS hosting policies.

Signature of Head of Household: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Head of Household: _____

Date: _____

If possible, include a family photo to be shared with the student you will be hosting.

Homestay Review- Verification

(To be completed by Program Leaders, and submitted to the Department of Global Education at least two months prior to the beginning of the program)

I _____ (Program Leader) from _____ (school) certify that the following steps have been completed and verified by me or by an Affiliate/Partner Organization before our group travels to _____ (country/region) on _____ (date).

- 1) *Host Family Application* is currently on file with the lead chaperone/school.
- 2) *Host Family Agreements* have been reviewed and signed by all families.
- 3) *Student Expectations* have been reviewed.
- 4) *Safety and Emergency* protocols have been reviewed by all students, host families and affiliates.
- 5) *Homestay Site Visit Checklist* has been completed and reviewed. Documents are currently on file with the lead chaperone/school.
- 6) *Affiliate Process for Host Family Review* has been completed (if applicable). Documents are currently on file with the lead chaperone/school.
- 7) *****NEW:** *Required Immunization Verification documentation* for incoming international students being hosted in Boston has been received, reviewed, and filed with Program Leader/school.]
- 8) *****NEW:** *Homestay Parental Waiver* form has been reviewed with parents.]
- 9) *Background checks have been completed.* All residents in the household over the age of 18 have completed a certified (government or security agency) background check. BPS trip leader and affiliates have copies of documentation indicating all persons in the household have passed the background checks.

OR

If a certified credential check cannot be met due to country/region visited, then an *official letter* vouching for each family's stability has been submitted to the Program Leader/school. This letter is currently on file.

Program Leader (Printed)

(Signature)

Date _____

