



Wisconsin International Academy
Homestay Program
Handbook

2018-2019



**Wisconsin
International
Academy**

Thank you for your interest in hosting a student through Wisconsin International Academy! Wisconsin International Academy (WIA) is a Total-Care[®] program for Chinese high school students. We have over 110 students from all across China who come to Milwaukee to attend some of its best high schools, improve their English, and learn about American culture.

While most of our students reside in our dormitory, the Homestay Family Program offers interested students an opportunity to more deeply immerse themselves in American culture and English language. Homestay families offer our students extraordinary opportunities to learn more about American society and to improve their English speaking abilities. In turn, we hope that hosting a WIA student may offer your family opportunities to develop a deep and lasting connection with the student as well as to learn more about Chinese language and culture.

A central part of your student's experience in the United States is their relationship with you, the homestay family. While the student's birth parents serve as their legal guardians, you are expected to supervise the academic performance, social conduct and health of your student during their stay with you. Homestay families need to provide basic needs and a safe and loving home for their student. Families should show the same care and support to their exchange student as they would to an actual relative, and families should also enjoy sharing their thoughts and experiences with their students.

Becoming a WIA Homestay Family

WIA is looking for families who are willing to open their homes, hearts and lives to a student from China. We want families who are willing to expose their student to American culture by allowing them to become a part of their family.

After expressing interest in the program, all interested Homestay Families need to fill out an application (attached at the end of this booklet) and submit it to the Homestay Coordinator. Each application will be reviewed and the family notified if they are being considered for the program.

A representative from WIA will come to your house for a home visit. After the home visit, a background check will be conducted and you will be matched with a student from our program. You will have an opportunity to meet this student and get to know them before their placement (if desired). Since many students who apply for a homestay have specific wishes for the family in which they are placed (i.e. wants/doesn't want pets, wants/doesn't want other children, etc.) sometimes we have to wait to place a family with a student that fits their expectations. Your family will be notified of acceptance and provided information pertaining to the student.

The WIA homestay program is "flexible," which means that at any point during the year, if your situation changes or if the needs of your student change, there is an option for the student to return to the dorm (for a period of time or permanently). However, we encourage our students and the homestay families to commit to at least one full semester.



Expectations of a Homestay Family

Hosting a student can be an extremely rewarding experience for everyone in the family, yet it is a role that requires a lot of responsibility. Homestay families are to meet the following expectations:

- Provide a safe and welcoming environment for trust and friendship to develop between the student and your family.
- Support and make the student feel like a part of the family, with the same privileges and obligations.
- Gently encourage the student to learn and adopt most of the ways of your household.
- Provide room and board for the student. All students must have their own bed. If the student must share a room, it should be with a child of the same gender and similar age. The student should also have an area in which to study, and a desk, a chair, and a bookshelf available to them.
- Provide the student with transportation to and from school and after-school activities.
- Provide the student with academic support as needed and able. Seek out support from the WIA Academic Coordinator/Tutors/ELL teachers if student shows significant unmet academic needs.
- Write newsletters each month to send to the student's parents in China. Newsletters should be sent to the Homestay Coordinator (who is also in charge of monthly newsletters for dorm-residing students), and should convey any struggles and triumphs the students have had over the course of the month academically and socially, any fun family or school activities that they have engaged in, and/or any photos that have been taken.
- Ensure the student knows how to contact family members, friends, and WIA.
- Voice any concerns and questions regarding the student to WIA and to the Homestay Coordinator.
- Exercise supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the student's well being.
- Encourage involvement in school and community life by introducing the student to neighbors, friends, classmates, and community groups.
- Inform the Homestay Coordinator of any plans to travel with your student atleast two weeks prior to your trip.

Homestay Family Stipends

Wisconsin International Academy provides homestay families with a monthly stipend to help cover the additional cost of groceries and other incidentals. All students are required to come with their own spending money, including money for lunch at school.

The homestay family stipend for the academic year will be \$900 per month. This is paid bi-monthly for the previous half-month. It will be pro-rated to the date the student starts with the family. Stipends are generally figured to be paid for the academic year only (approximately 10 months) and are not paid past the end of the school year.

The homestay family stipend is meant to cover the additional expenses associated with hosting a student, such as:

- Groceries
- Entertainment
- Gas and transportation
- Hygiene items
- Other incidentals
- Additional Utilities
- Room space

The homestay family stipend is considered taxable income, and host families will be issued a 1099 for the stipend at the end of each calendar year. For advice on how to best account for the stipend and any other expenses while hosting a student, Wisconsin International Academy recommends consulting with a tax professional.

Preparing for your student's arrival

All students who are qualified to apply for the WIA Homestay Program have lived in a WIA dorm and attended their school for at least a semester. All the applicant students are meeting high academic standards, have no disciplinary problems, and demonstrated an interest in being involved in WIA activities, community service events, and school groups and sports.

You will have a chance to meet with your student couple times to get to know them prior to the student's placement in your house. We recommend spending at least one full weekend with your student before their move-in with you. This makes us different from many student exchange programs that enable families to meet and interact with students prior to their placement.

Once a student match has been made with your family, you can begin to prepare your home for their arrival. Although the student does not necessarily need to have their own room, we require that you supply them with their own bed, sheets, a blanket and a pillow. Please provide a desk and chair and a storage space for their clothes and personal items as well.

Some other useful items include:

- Alarm clock or clock radio
- Reading or desk lamp
- Towels and washcloths
- Other small touches to make your student feel at home

Student Arrival

When you bring your student home, we prefer the entire family to be present at the time of arrival. Some students will be eager to talk and take in as much as possible, while others may be quiet and reserved. Show the student their room and give them a tour of the house. Let them know where different things are kept and how things work. Keep in mind that the first few hours are often overwhelming, so they might not remember everything you have told them. Give your student time to unpack, rest, and adjust to their new surroundings.

During the first few days, your student will be adjusting to life with an American family. Most of them have never spent more than a few days at a time with a host family before, and will probably be very excited and also very nervous. Don't be surprised if it is awkward in the beginning. Since they will be adjusting to speaking more English than they are used to, planning some

activities that are less language dependent (cooking, listening to music, sports/outdoor activities, etc.) in the first few days may help them to relax. Give the student time and after a while they will start to feel more comfortable in your home.

Language adjustment

WIA homestay students have all been in the United States for at least a semester, and are used to speaking and listening to English. However, there is a big difference between living in the dorm (where they speak mostly in Chinese with their friends) and being surrounded with English all day in an American family. It is very tiring to always communicate in a second language, so don't be surprised if your student is sometimes withdrawn. You can help by speaking slowly (but not loudly) and listening patiently. Since many students will instinctively nod when you ask if they understand you, encourage the student to repeat/rephrase any important information to ensure they have really grasped your message.

Culture Shock

Exchange students experience several stages of emotion during their time in the United States. Students who were here last year may repeat some of these phases again in their second year, although they may happen in a different order or less intensely. Over the months they will adjust and begin to feel more at home.

Here are some phases your student may experience:

1) **Excitement and curiosity** - Students are typically excited about their new surroundings and experiences when they first arrive. Comparisons between life in the U.S. and in China may be made. This stage typically lasts for about a month but varies for all students.

2) **Anxiety and shock** - After the euphoria wears off, some students experience shock when noticing the differences between the U.S. and China. Your student may become disoriented and homesick. This is completely normal and they may want to spend more time alone. They may want to call home a little more than

usual. Keep the lines of communication open and talk to your student about how they feel.

3) **Comfort** - Next students begin to feel more comfortable with their surroundings. This happens around the third or fourth month. Surroundings do not seem so new or foreign anymore and your student will begin to feel more at ease.

4) **Confidence** - Towards the end of the stay, your student will feel like a part of your family and will enjoy their life here. These emotions are typical for exchange students, but every student's experience varies. Some students go through all of these emotions but at different stages, while others may not have any of these feelings at all.

Being sensitive to cultural differences

The different cultural and class backgrounds of WIA students are important to consider as you adjust to life with your student.

- Because of the tremendous financial cost involved in sending a student to study in the US, most WIA students come from very financially privileged families. You may find that their understanding of money and spending habits are very different from your own.
- You may also find that WIA students may be used to more parental involvement, and not as adept at managing their time as American teenagers. You can help your student improve his/her time management skills by writing out a daily schedule and walking your student through it. Clear expectations are essential: let your student know what their responsibilities are, and help them make a plan that will enable them to successfully fulfill these responsibilities.
- American culture is more informal and more emotionally open than Chinese culture, so don't be surprised if your student is not immediately forthcoming with his/her opinions or feelings. Let your student know that you are willing to listen when they are ready to talk.
- Most Chinese people are not religious. While all WIA students are exposed to Christian religion and theology in their schools, they may or may not opt to attend church services with your family.

Involving your student in activities

Homestay families are encouraged to include their student in as many family activities and events as possible. Homestay students are also welcome to return to WIA at any time to participate in WIA-hosted activities, and host brothers and sisters may also join the student if desired. WIA Homestay Coordinator will email weekly flyers of WIA's upcoming weekend and community service activities that you are welcome to respond to and attend.

You and your student are expected to work out an agreement regarding transportation and appropriate hours for extracurricular activities. Your student may want to be involved in athletics and school activities, as well as like to attend social gatherings like parties and movies. Accommodate these activities as you would the activities of your own son or daughter, making clear how much advanced notice you need in order to arrange transportation.

Setting rules at home

Your family needs to establish rules with the host student shortly after they move in. It is not helpful to the student to receive special treatment for a period of time and then be expected to adjust to a different standard later. Putting things in writing may be helpful so that the student has a point of reference if they forget or don't understand something.

Students need to know your rules regarding phone and computer use, going out, and household chores and responsibilities, as well as any other family rules or expectations. WIA students are used to a very structured lifestyle in the dorm, and most students understand and adapt to a homestay family's rules and way of life quickly.

Telephone and Computer Use

You may notice that your student spends a lot of time on his/her cell phone or laptop. Many students are eager to communicate with friends and family back home, but may need guidance about appropriate use of their electronics. Staying up all night to talk to friends in China is not appropriate, nor is excessive gaming. Be sure to limit phone and computer use as you would with your own child. Your student may not understand that Americans consider texting during a conversation or during a meal to be rude, so please inform them of your family's feelings on when phones can/should be used.

Chores

Like any American teenager, your student can be expected to perform household tasks. Typical responsibilities include making the bed, cleaning their room, washing dishes, and doing laundry. Other chores may include setting the dinner table, taking out the trash, vacuuming, or helping to shovel the driveway. When you establish your rules with your student in the beginning, be sure to discuss any chores that may be expected of him or her. Be open to the possibility that your student may not be accustomed to performing certain tasks. You may have to show them how to use a dishwasher or washing machine.

Spending money

Students typically receive a certain amount of spending money from their parents every month to cover personal expenses like clothing, toiletries, entertainment, etc. Homestay family stipends are provided to cover your student's transportation, boarding, and meals. All other expenses are your student's responsibility. Of course, you can provide your students with everyday necessities like soap, toilet paper, toothpaste; but the student should buy their own school supplies and personal hygiene items (deodorant, female hygiene supplies, perfume, combs, etc.)

We advise you not to lend money to your student.

Emergency situations

It is important to go over all emergency contact information with your student including home, work and cell phone numbers. If there is a possibility that your student may be home alone, be sure they know how to contact you.

If your family has an emergency, WIA should be notified immediately of the situation. Your student may return to the dorm for an interval of time while your family resolves a crisis.

Students all have medical insurance provided through WIA, and you will be provided with a copy of their insurance card prior to their move-in. In case of any medical emergencies, you are expected to send the student to a hospital and sign any required documents with the rights pre-approved by the student's biological parents. Please contact the Homestay Coordinator or WIA immediately in the event of an emergency, and the Homestay Coordinator or a Student Advisor will meet you at the medical facility. WIA and any bill or receipts from medical care handle insurance claims or prescription costs should be submitted to WIA.

Student Rules

1. Host parents must approve of their student's activities. They should be informed of where their student is, whom they are with, and when they are expected to return home. Host Parents should oversee their student in the same way they would look after their own children.
2. Students may not purchase, possess, or consume alcoholic beverages, nor may they purchase cigarettes or smoke, even if over 18 years of age (per WIA rules). They may not use any illicit drugs. They may not possess weapons.
3. WIA students are strongly discouraged from dating, and may not pursue physical relationships of any kind. If you are concerned that your WIA student may be having sex, please let your Homestay Coordinator know immediately.
4. Violation of any local, State or Federal Law in the U.S. will cause the student to be sent home.
5. School attendance is mandatory. If the student exhibits behavioral problems, disregards school rules, or fails academically they may be required to return to the dorm, or be sent home.
6. Students must respect and obey all decisions made by WIA. Failure to abide by WIA rules may result in a student being sent home. Any additional expenses incurred due to early termination of an academic session will be the full responsibility of the student and their natural parents or legal guardians.
7. Students participate in the WIA Homestay Program to better their English and to learn about life in the United States. All students need to be willing to make adjustments accordingly to adapt to their Host Family, community, and school.

If these guidelines are not followed, disciplinary action will be taken. Misconduct by the student should be reported to the Homestay Coordinator and the school so it may be dealt with in a timely manner. Someone will contact the student to discuss the problem and try to come up with a solution. Usually the student is verbally warned before extreme action is taken, but this is dependent upon the severity of the behavior. Multiple offenses are a possible reason for sending a student home.



WIA Homestay Coordinator

WIA Homestay Coordinator is available for advice, questions, and problem solving. They serve as a liaison between you, your student, WIA, and the student's Chinese parents. They are familiar with their student's background. They should be aware of cultural differences that could potentially cause misunderstandings between you and your student. In difficult situations, your Homestay Coordinator can act as a mediator and provide guidance and support to fix the current problem and to prevent further conflicts from happening.

You will meet your Homestay Coordinator during your in-home interview and evaluation. They will also remain involved with the student, conducting homestay family conferences once a semester, and following up with phone calls to check in. Feel free to contact your Homestay Coordinator any time, as they are here to provide support and information.

You can call (414) 688 2198 ext. 520 to talk to WIA Homestay Coordinator.

Making Your Hosting Experience a Success!

- Be sensitive to cultural differences and the various stages of culture shock.
- Talk to your student regularly. Keep the lines of communication open so you know how they are doing.
- Be patient, especially as the student adjusts to the English language, to eating foreign foods, to taking on unfamiliar responsibilities, and to meeting new people.
- Involve your student in as many activities as possible, such as community and school functions, family gatherings, and holidays.
- Monitor your student's progress in school and offer assistance to them whenever possible.
- Keep in touch with your Homestay Coordinator. Let them know how you are coping or if you have any problems. They like to hear good news as well!
- Pay attention to your student and provide love and care. This will help make your experience memorable!





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Homestay Family Application

Family Information

Parents

Names _____

Home Address _____

Email: _____

Cell 1 _____ Cell 2 _____

Household Members:

Name	Relationship to You	Age /Grade	Gender	School
/ Occupation				

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Has anyone in your household been arrested or convicted of a felony? _____

If yes, please explain _____

Have you ever been a Host Family? _____

If yes, indicate student's home country _____

Indicate the best time for a home visit _____

Family Profile:

Hobbies and Interests:

Do you consider your family to be more (circle one):

- ☐ outgoing
- ☐ independent
- ☐ on-the-go
- ☐ quiet
- ☐ close-knit
- ☐ relaxed

Use three adjectives to describe your family: _____

Are there any other factors we should consider in matching you with a student?

Residence Information

Years at current address _____

Distance from School (Pius XI, CMHS, DHS, STM, ULS)

Will student have their own room or will they share? _____

If sharing, indicate age and gender of roommate _____

Do you have any pets? If yes, what kind and how many? _____

Will you provide transportation to and from school? _____

Housing Information

How many students are you interested in hosting and for how long? _____

Age and gender preference for student (ex: male/10th grade) _____

Please indicate which of the following you can provide for the student:

_____ Bed _____ Dresser _____ Computer _____ Desk / Chair

_____ TV _____ Bathroom _____ Internet Access _____ Book Shelf

I certify that information contained in this application is true and complete, and I authorize the verification of any of all information stated above. I understand that false or inaccurate information either intentionally or unintentionally may be grounds for not accepting us as a Host Family or removal from the WIA Homestay Program.

Name of Applicant

Signature of Applicant

Date

References : Please list two people who know your family well (friends, coworkers, church members, etc.) and can speak to your ability to provide a safe and caring environment for a homestay student.

Name:

Relationship:

Email:

Phone:

1. _____

2. _____