



Forte International Exchange Association

# Questions & Answers

FIEA Answers Your Questions About Hosting An Exchange Student

---

*We understand when a family considers opening its home and heart to an international exchange student there will be a lot of questions that will be asked. Here is just a few that have been asked most often:*

## **How will our family benefit by hosting an exchange student through FIEA?**

There are many reasons why hosting is a wonderful experience for the whole family. You and your family have a chance to learn about another culture and language – all in the comfort of your own home. You have the opportunity to start a life-long relationship with your new “son” or “daughter,” and when your student returns home you will have a special friend in another country. Members of your family will feel closer to each other through sharing your daily lives with an FIEA student. If you have children, they will gain a global perspective of the world – learning more about geography, communication and international cultures. If your children are young, they will love to have a big brother or sister from another country. Most of all, you all will have a lot of fun.

## **What are the requirements for being a host family?**

Host families are as different and diverse as Americans themselves. They come from all ethnic, racial and economic and religious backgrounds. They live in cities, small towns and rural communities.

You don't need to have teenagers in order to host. We encourage single parent families and retirees alike to apply. Regardless if you have young children, adult children or no children at all – your open home can serve as a supportive environment for our exchange students adjusting to a new culture.

## **How much time should we expect to host our exchange student?**

Most of our students live in the US for one academic year – 10 months – approximately from mid-August through June. Some five-month hosting opportunities are available for semester students arriving in either January or August. Occasionally we seek short-term host families for 3-4 weeks during the summer to help us with students who come to learn English and expose themselves to American culture.

We ask our host families to greet their student at the airport and make them feel welcomed. If possible, an area representative will be there as well.

## **Will our family be paid for hosting a FIEA student?**

No. US State Department guidelines do not allow us to pay families for the sole purpose of hosting exchange students. We encourage family members to accept their exchange student just like a brother, sister, son or daughter. This way, hosting becomes an enriching volunteer experience.

## **Will our FIEA student speak English?**

All of our students who come to the US have studied English for five years or more in their home country – practicing both written and spoken English. They also have to pass a basic English proficiency exam administered by FIEA before we accept their application.

## **How much does it cost to host a FIEA student?**

There is no charge. The only expenses for your family will be the costs of including another person in your regular activities, including three meals a day. Although during the school week, the student will have his/her personal funds for lunch money. You are eligible for a \$50 per month federal tax deduction for hosting an exchange student.

## **Are we responsible for our student's medical bills or spending money?**

No. FIEA students are fully covered with medical and accidental insurance once they enter the US. The insurance card with policy information will be sent directly to you as a host family member prior to the student's arrival.

Our students are expected to pay for school lunches, tourism expenses during exchange period and additional spending money for everyday items.

## **Where would our FIEA student attend school?**

Once you have been approved as a host family, FIEA contacts the local high school in your district to begin enrollment procedures. While at the high school, he/she will take courses typical of an American his or her age, and is welcomed to participate in extracurricular activities.

## **Does FIEA require that we have a separate bedroom for our exchange student?**

No, you don't need to have a separate room for your FIEA student. He or she may share a bedroom with a same-sex child. All you need to provide is a bed and quiet study area.

## **How are FIEA students and host families matched up?**

The first step is for your family to complete a "Host Family Application" and be interviewed in your home by a FIEA area representative. After the interview, we also perform criminal background checks on potential host families. Once approved, our area representative will assign you an exchange student, taking into consideration a number of factors to help make the best possible match. Oftentimes, there are several matches available from which the host family can choose.

Variables include your family's values, the kind of activities you're involved in (sports, arts, intellectual pursuits, etc.), your religious preferences, whether you'd prefer a student who is quiet or outgoing, what part of the world you'd prefer your student to be from and so forth. Our national office does our best to make matches based on availability and common factors before making recommendations to area representatives.

## **How will FIEA prepare us to be a host family?**

FIEA provides each family with a Host Family Handbook, which serves as a reference guide throughout the exchange year. Also before your student arrives, you will receive an orientation by either the area representative or from our national office. This is an opportunity to get answers to any last-minute questions – and learn how to support your new family member through normal adjustments such as culture shock and speaking a new language.

Please keep in mind that your FIEA area representative and our national office are always ready and able to answer your questions and help you out all year long.

## **What will happen if we have problems while hosting?**

At FIEA, we believe in sustaining an environment for students and family members to feel safe to discuss what is troubling them. We partner with host families to resolve conflict. Our area representatives will do their best to help you resolve any difficult situations that arise during the year. While we don't anticipate any major crisis, if the situation is severe, please don't hesitate to call our national office directly. Our national office can issue severe warnings and put the student on probation. FIEA students can be sent back to their home country at the discretion of the national office. Occasionally, FIEA will find another home for the student, although this usually isn't necessary.

## **What is the purpose behind the exchange program?**

FIEA, began in 2000 as an educational non-profit from our parent company, Forte Group International, Inc. Our parent company was founded with the purpose of fostering good business relations between the US and China. With the same spirit, Forte wanted to offer the two countries an opportunity to appreciate and learn from one another. Today we represent students all around the world. Recently we have placed students from South Korea, Thailand, China, Malaysia and India.

FIEA is designated by the US State Department to facilitate the Fulbright-Hayes J1/Exchange Visitor Program. The J1 program was initiated in the 1960s by an act of US Congress to expose foreign students to American culture, society and values. FIEA is also a certified member of the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).

We consider our host families to be citizen-ambassadors. Our families play a unique role in representing what America is truly about to these students whose idea of the US is sometimes formed only by what they see on television or are taught in their schools. Our students look forward to improving his/her English as well as experiencing American culture first-hand.

## **What other kinds of activities will our student participate in while in the US?**

The intention behind hosting is to have your FIEA student participate in any activities your family is involved in – from household chores to family outings. FIEA students come to the US expecting a family living experience, not a travel program. However, many families enjoy showing their student what makes our country special – everything from historical places to natural wonders, from sporting events to the arts.

No doubt your FIEA student also will make friends in school and in the community, and will be involved in activities through these networks.

## **Who do I contact for more information about hosting an FIEA student?**

If you're interested in hosting an FIEA student or if you simply have other questions, please call us toll free 1-888-893-6783 or visit us online at [www.orgsites.com/dc/forte](http://www.orgsites.com/dc/forte). Hosting will be a wonderful educational experience for your entire family. Please feel free to share this information with others who may be interested in hosting an exchange student as well.