



The Host Home Experience

Many of our delegates stay with host families during their time in Olympia. It is a wonderful experience for both students and families, and should be looked at as an opportunity for learning and growth.

If you choose to have your delegates stay in host homes while in Olympia **the two most important things to remember as an Advisor are:**

1. IT IS YOUR JOB TO KEEP KIDS SAFE

The most important part of your job when it comes to host families is **ensuring your students safety. Communication with the host family is key.** After receiving your host information you need to touch base with the family. You should write a letter or email and follow it up with a phone call so that you can answer any questions they may have. If you get an answering machine or do not hear back from an email, **please try again until you make contact.** Host families also need to meet you face to face when you drop off your students on the first night. Make sure that they have your contact information and know that they should call you if they have any questions or problems. **If you have any reservations about a family, even a gut feeling, you have the authority to take your students out of a host home.** Contact the state office immediately and we will place your students in another home.

2. HOST FAMILIES ARE VOLUNTEERS

Host families do not get reimbursed in any way for opening their homes to our students. They are volunteers who are doing you and your students an enormous service.

It is for this reason that it is so important to treat host families with the utmost respect. We want them to continue volunteering their time and energies in the years to come. It is also important for students to thank their families properly. It is encouraged for each group of students staying at a home to bring a small thank you gift or card for their family. Often times students try to bring something from their area of the state. Listed below are ideas for this gift.

Thank you gift ideas for host families:

- Fresh flowers
- Coffee/tea
- A homemade card
- Mugs



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- Starbucks gift cards (\$10-\$20)
- Gift certificate to a local coffee shop or bakery
- Youth & Government T-shirt/lapel pin
- Paint a piece of pottery at a local shop
- Potted flowers
- A gift basket
- A book
- Homemade jam
- Something specific from you area of the state (i.e.-assorted apples or smoked salmon)



Host Home Expectations

Students

1. All house rules set by host homes are to be followed at all times.
2. Discuss with your hosts the times that you plan on leaving and arriving each day.
3. Delegates must not leave host homes, unless chaperoned by their advisor.
4. Delegates may not ride in host family's vehicles.
5. Delegates may not make personal phone calls without permission from host family.
6. Delegates must uphold all rules and expectations of the YMCA Youth & Government code of conduct while staying with their host families.
7. Each student, or group of students staying at a home, should present their family with a gift or card of thanks for opening their home. This gift should be small and may be presented at the beginning or end of the trip. A list of possible gift ideas is listed in this section of your handbook.

Advisors

1. Turn in student **housing request forms** by the posted deadline.
2. Make sure that all students are listed on the request form and forms are completed when turned into state office.
3. **Look over assignments for mistakes** after receiving them from the State Office (i.e.-boys rooming with girls or students staying alone.)
4. **Send a letter** to each host family within one week of receiving your housing information. This letter should include your name and contact information (including cell phone while in Olympia) as well as the names of the students that will be staying with them.
5. **Call each host home (this is very important!)** 3 days after sending the letter to touch base and answer questions they may have about the program or your students.
6. Upon arriving to drop off students, **advisors need to walk students to the door** and introduce themselves to the host family. At this time you can answer any last minute questions, give them another copy of the program schedule and give them your contact information again.
7. While in Olympia make sure to **communicate** with your host families. If you are going to be late let them know.
8. Make sure that each student, or group of students at each home, has a **thank you gift/card/letter for their family**. It is best to bring the gift from home, however a run to the mall or downtown may be necessary to accomplish this task.
9. **Send a card** after the event, signed by each person who stayed in the home, thanking them for opening their home.



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State Office

1. Complete a Washington State Patrol background check on each person in the household over 16 years of age.
2. Place at least 2 students in each host home (no student stays alone).
3. Create maps and directions for each delegation noting the placement of each host home.
4. Have host home information ready for Advisors when they check in at Leadership Training. Information packets will be mailed to Advisors who are not able to attend Leadership Training.



Sample Home Stay Letter

This letter should be sent out to all host families as soon as possible after receiving your home stay information packet. Included with this letter should be a Program Schedule with drop off times highlighted.

Name
Address
Address

Date

Dear First Names of Host Family:

My name is **your name**, Lead Advisor from the **your school or YMCA affiliation**, Youth & Government Delegation and I want to thank you for opening your home to delegates for the 63rd YMCA Youth Legislature, May 5-8, 2010. I also want to share with you some additional information and expectations regarding the delegates' stay in your home. Enclosed you will find a Preliminary Program Schedule and highlighted times when you can expect the teens coming and going to and from your home. Please check this schedule and plan appropriately. Also, I'm assuming that the state office for the Youth & Government program has communicated to you about your commitment regarding meals for the students. They are scheduled to have breakfast on Thursday, Friday and Saturday in addition to dinner on Friday.

You will find that they are well-behaved, respectful individuals. However, I would like to inform you that participants involved in our delegation have signed an agreement that they will not indulge in any alcohol, drugs, sexual activity and/or tobacco products. Also, while the teens are in your homes they should not leave or travel in non-YMCA vehicles for any reason. Again, you should not have any concerns with the delegates assigned to your home and I thank you for your understanding and support in this area.

Finally, if you need to get in touch with me for any reason during the teens' stay, I can be reached at the **name and phone number of your hotel in Olympia** or my cell phone during the day at **(555) 555-5555**.

The students have worked hard and are looking forward to their Olympia experience. I know they will be excited to share with you what is going on at the Capitol and about their role in the program. I plan on calling you within the next few days to follow up this letter and to answer any questions you might have. Again, I want to thank you for opening up your home, family and friendship to these delegates

Sincerely,
Your Name



Host Homes vs. Hotels

During your delegation's stay in Olympia there are two options for housing. The first is host homes and the second is hotels. There are pros and cons to both options and each advisor/delegation must make this decision based on what is best for them. Below you will find information that will help you make the best decision for your group.

	Cost	Travel Time	Transportation	Meals
Host Homes	Free – host families volunteer to house students and this process is organized by the state office.	Travel to and from host homes can take as much as two hours twice a day.	Vans are needed to transport students to host homes – mini buses work, however are difficult to maneuver in some driveways.	Friday evening, prior to the dance, students leave session early for a meal with their host families. Host families also provide breakfast for students.
Hotels	Reservations are made and rooms are paid for by individual delegations.	Downtown hotels are within walking distance, however often it is easier to find a better deal just a bit further away.	Any type of transportation, including full size buses, will work fine.	Delegations not staying with host families will need to provide dinner on Friday as well as breakfasts.

Things to think about when staying in hotels during Youth Legislature:

1. **Location:** Many delegations choose to stay in hotels near the Capitol in downtown Olympia. This makes it possible for students to walk to and from the Capitol as well as to restaurants for dinner. Others, however, have found that staying in Tumwater or Lacey provides less temptation for students to "wander".



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2. **Supervision:** Staying in hotels with teenagers poses challenges in terms of supervision. It is important that students do not leave the hotel without an adult, especially in downtown Olympia; as it is not always a safe place to be at night.
3. **Weather:** If you decide to stay at a hotel downtown and plan on walking to the Capitol each day it is important to remember that May in Olympia often brings rain so students should make sure to bring umbrellas, extra shoes for walking in, and rain coats.
4. **Food:** Look for hotels that provide a continental breakfast with your stay.

The following websites will help you locate food and lodging in the Olympia area:

<http://www.ci.olympia.wa.us/>

<http://www.gonorthwest.com/Washington/puget/Olympia/Olympia.htm>