

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOST FAMILIES

Q. Will I have to pay taxes on the stipend I receive?

Yes. Stipend payments are considered non-employment income. VIA issues a 1099 tax form to all hosting families.

As host families may be asked to prove the stipend money was spent on their student in order to avoid paying taxes on it. VIA recommends that host families keep track of spending and speak with their tax consultant in order to best see how to deduct the taxable income portion that was spent on the student.

Q. What does the host application process entail? Can you walk me through it from start to finish?

A. Because we hold our hosts to a higher standard, our host approval process includes:

- An application
- A brief phone screen
- A short home inspection and
- A background check (on everyone in the home age 18 and over. At no cost to you)

Our application is intended to gather the basic information including the number of members in your household; your rules and expectations within your home and your dietary restrictions and/or allergies.

VIA Phone screening which can be completed before or after an application has been submitted, provide our Regional Directors the opportunity to speak with you in person to learn more about why you are seeking to host, as well as answer any questions you may have regarding your application. If you would like to schedule a phone screen, or learn more about the application process, you can call our Regional Directors at 352-978-9520.

After you have completed both an application and a screening, one of our local community counselors will visit your home for a brief tour and in-person interview.

Once the entire application process is complete, VIA will run a criminal background check for all of the adults in your home (at no cost to you). Once this background check is complete, you will be officially notified of your acceptance as a VIA host family.

Q. After I have been successfully approved as a host family, am I guaranteed a student?

A. No, however most of our families are matched with incoming students in their areas.

Once a family has been approved, their application will be kept in the VIA data base for as long as you're willing to host. This allows us to offer your family students on a regular basis.

Q. Do I need to personally drive the student to and from school each day?

A. No. Although we prefer that hosts personally transport students, students may take a school bus or carpool with a trusted source (NO UBER OR TAXIES).

Q. How long do students stay? What sort of time commitment do I need to make?

A. We have students that come for full academic year (no more than 10 months) and semester students as well.

Because we want our program to provide continuity for our students and host families we encourage both students and host families to commit to hosting for a full academic year.

Q. Can I host the same student for multiple years?

Yes! We encourage our families and students to build a bond and hope they seek to live together for the entire time of the students high school years.

Q. What is the minimum age requirement for hosting a student?

A. Hosts must be at least 25 years old.

Q. Can school faculty host a student?

A. Yes, VIA encourages faculty members at our partner schools to host a student! It's a great experience and our students learn great values when living with a teacher at the same school they are attending. Some of our schools or dioceses may not allow school faculty to host. If no such restrictions exist, the faculty member would fill out the same host family application and proceeds as anyone else would.

Q. Is VIA recognized by any third party organizations as a reputable homestay provider?

A. Yes. We are proud to be approved by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, the preeminent organization for vetting international educational travel providers. This recognition reflects VIA's commitment to providing a safe and accommodating homestay program for students and host families.

Q. What types of visas do the students have?

A. All our students will be coming over with an F1 student visa.

Q. Are the students allowed to drive?

A. No, we do not allow any of our students to drive while they are enrolled in a VIA program, regardless of their age.

Q. Do the students staying for the 10-month school year go home over the summer or winter breaks?

A. Most all our students do go home for winter break, although some will stay with family members living in the United States. Almost all students go home for summer breaks.

Q. Am I allowed to invite my student on family trips?

Yes, you encouraged to bring your students on family trips. Although students are not required to attend, we encourage students to participate in family events, including trips and outings.
(PLEASE COMPLETE THE TRAVEL RELEASE FOR ANY FORMS OF TRAVELING)

Q. Can I still host a student if I have a pet?

A. Yes! In fact, some of our students want to live with families who have pets. We will however not present your host profile to students who have allergies or a fear of animals.

Q. What if I can't host a student but know someone who can? Is there any sort of referral bonus for sending qualified hosts to VIA?

A. Yes, as of this year 2017 there is a referral bonus! Any time you refer an applicant who becomes an approved host you will earn a \$200 referral bonus.

Q. Do the students have health insurance?

A. Yes. Every student will arrive with health insurance.

Q. Can I host more than one student?

A. Yes. It is possible to host more than one student, there may be additional requirements for host families who choose to host multiple students. If you're interested in hosting multiple students, we encourage you to call our office at 352-978-9520 and speak with one of our Regional Directors, as some of our schools have different rules.

Q. I am a single parent. Can I be a host?

A. Yes, we encourage all interested families to apply! We have a wide variety of approved hosts within our program and encourage all interested parties to apply.

Q. Can I request a male or female student?

A. Yes. During the application process you will have the opportunity to state a gender preference. If you state a gender preference, you will be greatly limiting the pool of potential students you might be able to host.

. What age is the student I'll be hosting?

A. We currently work primarily with students in middle & high school (roughly ages 13-19).

Q. If any problems arise, is there a member of VIA I can contact?

A. Yes. Each community we work with has a local Community Counselor who serves as the primary person between the host family, VIA and your international student's school. Additionally, each community has its own Residential Manager stationed at VIA office.

If you should need to contact a student's parents or to navigate any cultural or linguistic miscommunications, VIA features international counselors who can assist with communication.

Q. How does VIA support its host families?

A. VIA, is proud to offer you the support and resources host families need to thrive and grow.

When your family becomes a VIA family and your paired with a student, our Regional Directors and international support counselors will be the communication between your family and your student's natural parents in order to introduce you to one another. This international support counselors are available for translation services throughout your student's stay in case an emergency arises. Then, you will receive training materials and handbooks to prepare you for your student's arrival.

When your new family member arrives and settles into your home, you will receive an in-person check-in from your local community counselor. This counselor will serve as your point-person for all of your basic questions or needs and will provide ongoing support to you and your family throughout each student's stay. Your community counselor will provide regular check-ins, both via phone and in-person and in some cases even organize exciting events and activities for local host families and their students.

VIA also provides host families a monthly stipend to offset the additional costs associated with hosting a student.