



EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

Secondary School Student Category

Paying Host Families

The Department concludes as a matter of policy that host families should not be paid for hosting exchange students.

Secondary School Student exchange programs have been part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts since 1949. These programs promote mutual understanding by providing foreign students the opportunity to study in American high schools while living with an American host family. Not only are the students themselves transformed by these experiences, so, too, are their families, friends, and teachers back home. Americans, such as the host families, students, and sponsor representatives whose lives intersect with these students benefit as well.

Historically, this program has been carried out through the use of voluntary host families. However, the Department has learned that some sponsors are currently or intending to soon begin compensating American families to host secondary school students. Existing regulations governing this category of exchange do not specifically address payment of host families. Concerns have been raised by several sponsors regarding this practice and the Department, in response to these concerns, canvassed the Secondary School Student exchange community requesting their comment on this practice. There are 102 organizations designated by the Department to conduct Secondary School Student exchange programs. Fifty organizations provided comment. Of these, 4 indicated that they were currently paying host families and 6 believed that host families should be paid. The remaining 40 sponsors opposed the payment of host families, citing that paying host families would not serve the program well and that the long-term success of the current model is based on the relationship between the participant and the host family, the success of which is the result of an act of generosity and citizenship. We agree.