



Host Family Handbook

Welcome!

Thank you for your willingness to host an international student through the Janesville International Education Program. We believe that this will be an enriching and valuable experience for your family and the student, which can have a long lasting, positive impact. Our hope is that many memories are created and a lifelong relationship is formed through this experience.

If this is your first time hosting, you may have many questions. This handbook is designed as a reference to guide you through the process, however, feel free to reach out to a JIEP contact person with questions or concerns. Our contact information is listed on the following page, or visit our website at jiep.info. We will provide monthly contact with each host family, as well as regular emails and posts on the private Facebook group.

Thanks again, and welcome to JIEP!

About JIEP

The Janesville International Education Program (JIEP) promotes cross-cultural understanding between our community and those around the world through the implementation of strategic programming and curriculum for local and international students and educators. JIEP coordinates collaboration and interactions between the School District of Janesville and our international partners in education by organizing and managing programs that support our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements. These MoUs contain the following objectives:

- Promote global education.
- Strengthen relationships and broaden international understanding and appreciation for each partner's leaders, teachers, students, community, and cultures.
- Encourage the development and exchange of cultural ideas and practices.
- Provide shared development opportunities for each partner's leaders, teachers, students, and community members.

These objectives provide a pathway for our local Janesville students, teachers, administrators, and community members to engage in international experiences, establish personal connections, share professional resources, and form new friendships around the world.

JIEP Contacts

The International Education Program Coordinator will be your primary contact person for matters related to JIEP. The coordinator will provide monthly communication on a variety of topics and will serve in assisting and supporting you from pre-arrival to post-departure of students.

The coordinator and/or international counselor can assist with School District of Janesville policies, JIEP policies, student questions and concerns, emergency situations, and other topics. The coordinator or counselor should be your first point of contact for assistance. If you are unable to contact either the coordinator or counselor, then contact one of the directors.

In the event of an emergency that requires police, fire, or emergency medical attention, call 911.

International Education Program Coordinator:

Mary Christensen

Email: mary.christensen@janesville.k12.wi.us

WeChat: maryc717

Phone: 608-921-5814

International School Counselor:

Karl Bryan

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International Program Director:

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China Office Director:

Annie Wu

Email: sdawinj@qq.com

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JIEP Communication Norms

Monthly check-ins and regular email/online correspondence will be provided by the JIEP coordinator. If you have a question or concern, it is best to reach out directly to the JIEP coordinator right away, even if it seems like a small issue. You should always notify the JIEP coordinator or another JIEP contact for the following reasons:

- The student needs medical/health related treatment
- The student has not returned home at the usual time and you cannot reach him/her
- The student is in violation of one of the rules listed in the “Student Expectations Section”
- There is a change in members of your household (i.e., a relative over 17 years old moves in)

Quick Reference Student Emergency Information:

Natural Parent Contact Information:

Father's Name: _____

Phone: _____ WeChat: _____

Email: _____

Mother's Name: _____

Phone: _____ WeChat: _____

Email: _____

Student Medical Information:

Insurance Provider: _____

Policy Number: _____

Medications: _____

Allergies: _____

Other Important Information: _____

Overview of Host Family Responsibilities

- Welcome your international student as a member of your family.
- Be clear about rules and expectations.
- Provide a bedroom with a door. Students may share a bedroom with another family member of the same gender and similar age.
- Each child must have his/her own bed and separate storage for clothing and personal items.
- Provide a quiet place in the home for study and homework.
- Provide regular transportation to and from school and required events, i.e. TOEFL, SAT, required school events.
- Prepare or provide a variety of daily meals (with the exception of school lunches) and access to food for snacks.
- Understand that having an additional person will result in higher utility costs and typical wear and tear of living space, appliances, etc.
- Maintain regular communication with JIEP and SDJ staff regarding the student(s) you are hosting.
- Be willing to take on parental responsibilities for the student, i.e., attending school, school events, meetings, etc, taking the student to the clinic if necessary, promoting participation in school, community, or local cultural events.
- Keep an open mind. Each student will have a unique personality and timeline for adjusting to a new setting.

Overview of Student Expectations

- Engage with the host family as a family member.
- Treat host family members and their home with respect.
- Establish regular and open communication with host family to communicate preferences, needs, concerns, etc.
- Comply with rules and host family expectations, i.e., chores.
- Attend school daily unless excused by a host parent or SDJ.
- Maintain passing grades in all courses.
- Participate in JIEP activities/events.
- Comply with school rules.

In addition to the expectations listed above, students are expected to comply with the following program rules:

Infractions of the rules below will result in immediate dismissal from the Janesville International Education Program and placement of the student's Visa in Loss of Status. Additionally, students will be sent home at their natural parent's expense:

1. Students must abide by all laws of the United States.
2. It is against the law in the United States for school age students to buy or consume alcohol or tobacco/nicotine products. This law applies to all foreign exchange students as well. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol or tobacco/nicotine products in the United States is 21.
3. The use of drugs for non-medical reasons by students under any circumstances is strictly forbidden.
4. Students are not permitted to hitchhike.
5. Students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms under any circumstances.
6. Students are not permitted to hold part-time jobs; there are strict rules governing employment for international students. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation. If students would like to

earn spending money during their stay, they are permitted to hold small jobs (no more than 10 hours per week) such as baby-sitting, grass cutting and newspaper delivery.

7. Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, snowmobiles, and cars) except during an accredited driver education class.
8. The stealing or taking any item or property of others is against the law and is strictly prohibited.

Continuous failure to abide by the following rules along with the school rules may result in dismissal from the Janesville International Education Program and place the student's Visa in Loss of Status, and being sent home at their natural parent's expense:

1. The legal age for buying, selling or possessing tobacco and nicotine products, including but not limited to cigarettes and vapor products, in the United States is 21. Smoking or vaping at school or anywhere in the state is not permitted for people under the age of 21. If you have indicated that you are a non-smoker on your application and you do in fact smoke, you will be placed on probation.
2. Students must always be aware of their responsibility as exchange students and as such, must make a determined effort to be a positive ambassador for their home country in their school, residence and host community.
3. Students must attend school daily unless sick and under a doctor's care or with special permission from the host family.
4. Students must complete all homework and assignments. Students must be full time students and maintain a "C" average or better in all classes. Failure to maintain a "C" average will result in academic probation.
5. Students are not permitted to visit such places as pornographic shops, adult theaters, drinking establishments, or any web sites related to pornography or gambling.
6. Students must show respect for their host families and participate in scheduled activities.
7. Students must follow host family rules and expectations.
8. Students cannot change host families at will.
9. Students may not have sexual relationships or sexual contact with others, nor openly display affection.

In addition, all students enrolled in the School District of Janesville must comply with the District's handbook, found here: [SDJ Student & Parent Handbook](#).

As a reminder, all JIEP student participants and their parents have signed and submitted a Conduct Agreement. Please note the following reasons that could result in dismissal from the JIEP program:

1. General misconduct or violation of any program, school, host residence, local, state, and/or federal rules
 - a. Including but not limited to: drug, alcohol, tobacco use
2. Unexcused absences from school
3. Not meeting academic expectations
4. When a student's mental and/or physical health is in jeopardy

Pre-arrival preparation

Communication: Establishing communication with your student prior to his/her arrival is a great way to begin forming a positive familial relationship. The JIEP coordinator will share contact information between students and host families approximately two months before the group's arrival. The student's parent/s may also want to text, email, or video chat with you before their child departs for the US. This relationship with natural parents can also be very helpful throughout the duration of his/her stay.

Culture: Learning about the customs and culture of your student's home country can be very helpful in helping with the adjustment to the US. Some great in-person resources include: past host families, JIEP coordinator, and/or counselor.

Room Preparation: Whether the student will have his/her own bedroom or share a space with another child, it is important to have the space ready when he/she arrives. Students will arrive tired and anxious, so having a space of their own will ease the transition. Please refer to the "Host Family Responsibilities" section for requirements.

Host Family Orientation Meeting: JIEP will hold an orientation meeting for all new and returning host parents approximately 2-3 weeks prior to the students' arrival. At this meeting, host families will receive any program updates, as well as all necessary paperwork related to JIEP and school. There will also be an opportunity to discuss scenarios and ask and answer questions.

Arrival

The School District of Janesville's F-1 students will arrive in Chicago in either one or two groups, which will be coordinated with the assistance of our partner programs abroad. A JIEP representative will meet the students at O'Hare Airport and provide transportation to Janesville. Host families will receive correspondence regarding pick up location and time at the orientation meeting about 2-3 weeks prior to their arrival in mid-August.

Many students and host families will have been in contact via phone or online prior to their arrival, so meeting in person for the first time is very exciting. The students arrive a bit exhausted, anxious, and hungry, so having a welcome sign or banner with your student's name may be helpful.

As soon as possible after arrival, it is important for your student to become familiar with your home and family norms. Engaging in or discussing the following topics is highly recommended:

- A tour of your home, including rooms or areas they may enter and those they may not enter.
- Demonstration of the correct way of how to safely and correctly operate appliances, etc. such as: microwave, stove/oven, dishwasher, washing machine.
- Explanation for proper use of and household processes in the bathroom, ie., shower, toilet, sink.
- Household rules, including: chores, guests, homework expectations, curfews, etc.
- Reviewing emergency contact information, including the possibility of downloading an app (Life360, WeChat, etc. for example) to share the whereabouts of family members.

Suggested "To Do" items within the first few days:

- Banking Information
 - Students typically open a debit/checking account after arriving in Janesville. They will need to bring a passport, their I-20 form, and money to deposit.
 - Students must keep finances, accounts, PIN numbers, etc. completely from those of the host family.
 - There are several local banks to choose from, JIEP does not recommend a specific bank or credit union.
- Cell Phone setup
 - Students will have the option to set up a prepaid cellular service prior to their arrival. If they do not choose that option, JIEP will arrange an appointment with a local cellular provider to come to the School District and discuss plan options with students onsite. This will be communicated by the JIEP coordinator.
- Sports Physical
 - If a student has elected to participate in a school sport, they will be scheduled for a sports physical. The cost of the physical is covered by the program, and the JIEP coordinator will contact host families to schedule the appointment.
- F-1 Student Orientation
 - Student orientation for F-1 students will take place prior to the first official day of school. It is mandatory for all F-1 students to attend orientation.

Living with an International Student

Cultural Assimilation:

The first few days will probably be the most exciting, but may also be the most difficult for your student. Everything is new and different. Even though he/she has prepared for this exciting experience, there will still be some adjustment periods as well. Some cultural shock is normal. It is best for the student to acknowledge his/her feelings and talk with others about it. The term cultural shock is simply a way of describing the range of feelings experienced by anyone who leaves a familiar culture to live in a different and less familiar culture. The good news is, for most students, culture shock is very temporary.

During this time, it is even more important that the student does not withdraw from people but becomes involved in school, family, and community activities. Please remember that everyday experiences, like trying new foods, going places and spending time with others are all new for him/her. We ask the students to avoid chatting, calling, or emailing home too often as talking to family and your friends back home may deepen feelings of loneliness. It is important for the students to focus on the experience in Janesville!

Language Adjustment:

Students are encouraged to speak English at the host family's home and at school, as much as possible. However, speaking English can be difficult and frustrating depending upon the student's English language capabilities. The first days will be the most difficult as the colloquial terms in our area will be completely new to them. Certain everyday verbal expressions are important to Americans. Many expressions and vocabulary terms are specific to the Midwest, to Wisconsin, and even specific to Janesville. Students may not be used to the local "Midwestern nice" customs of using "please", "thank you", and "excuse me" with great frequency. Additionally, to English Learners, many Americans seem to speak quickly, mumble, or slur their words; students will likely need to ask you to slow down or repeat words. Please be patient, be willing to simplify your vocabulary when necessary, and use gestures if it seems like the student is struggling with comprehension.

Homesickness:

When the initial excitement of living in a new culture and family begins to fade, many students begin to feel homesick. This is a common occurrence and does not mean that the host family is doing anything wrong. Keeping an open dialogue with the student and observing behavior can help identify homesickness. Students are encouraged to stay active and engaged in home and school activities to help avoid or minimize homesickness. If you are concerned that your student's mood or personality have changed, please reach out to the JIEP coordinator or counselor.

Student Insurance:

Students are required to carry international student insurance, which covers some health and travel issues. Provider and policy information will be shared with each host family upon student arrival.

IMPORTANT: If your student needs medical treatment, do not sign as the guarantor at the clinic or hospital. Fill in the student's natural parent's information on the guarantor form.

Travel Requests:

Unsupervised student travel is not endorsed by the School District of Janesville, Craig or Parker High School, or the Janesville International Education Program. Chinese parents sign an "Accident Waiver and Release of Liability" form, which releases the School District and host families from liability if students travel without supervision. If students request to travel without host family supervision, JIEP must receive written permission from their natural parents prior to traveling.

If you would like your international student to join you on a family trip, please contact the JIEP coordinator to help facilitate your request.

Many students plan to return to their home country during winter or spring break. This is allowed, but students must:

- Have their I-20 form signed by the PDSO or DSO prior to departure. This is required to re-enter the United States.
- Not schedule departure or return outside of the scheduled break.
- Complete the Planned Absence form prior to departure.

Student Obligations & Responsibilities:

Students enrolled in the Janesville International Education Program under an F-1 visa are admitted to study and receive academic credit, with the goal of earning a School District of Janesville diploma from either Joseph A. Craig or George S. Parker high school. Most students also plan to attend a college or university in the United States after high school. Given these desired outcomes, successful completion of high school, as well as meeting required testing obligations are necessary.

School Day

8:00 AM - 3:28 PM

School Calendar

The school calendar is available online here: [2020-21 School Calendar](#)

Please note, it is VERY IMPORTANT to check the school calendar before scheduling any travel or events that may cause absences from school.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory. Students may miss school only for acceptable reasons, such as illness, religious observances, university visits, field trips and other school-related excursions. Host parents must call the Attendance Office at 743-5230 for any absences. Absences for unacceptable reasons are “unexcused” and can result in disciplinary consequences.

When a host parent knows in advance that a student will miss school, they should obtain a Planned Absence Form from the Attendance Office. It should be completed and returned to the Attendance Office before the absence. Students are responsible for getting all assignments before pre-planned absences.

Standardized Testing and Exams

F-1 students will need to take one or more standardized tests after they arrive. Typically, they take the SAT, TOEFL, or IELTS. It is common for students to take these exams multiple times. **When possible, students should sign up for the option of the local testing site.** Students and host families should schedule and plan transportation to and from testing sites together, which helps in coordinating carpools with other host families if possible.

After Graduation

We request that students plan their departure from Janesville at least a few days after the graduation ceremony. This allows time for proper farewells of friends and family, packing, and cleaning their space for the final time. There is a limit on how long they are allowed to stay in the US before they are obligated to return to their home country. Please check with the international counselor for details.

Note: F-1 students returning to the United States for college or university might request to leave belongings at your house until they arrive for their fall term. This is not an obligation whatsoever and is completely at the discretion of each host family.

Addressing Issues

Typically, host families and students have a rewarding and mutually beneficial experience. That is not to say that there are never any issues; rather, the typical teenage issues that arise are identified and resolved between the host family and student.

Some typical issues for international students that are addressed with the host family are:

- Homesickness
- Academic struggles
- Adjusting to the new culture
- Becoming acclimated with a new educational system and/or school
- Pressure to succeed
- Keeping his/her room clean and/or chores
- Keeping a healthy sleep pattern

Occasionally circumstances arise that need to be addressed with the JIEP coordinator and/or the international counselor. If you feel as the host parent that there is a behavioral concern that needs to be addressed, please contact the JIEP coordinator or counselor to schedule a time to discuss the issue. If the issue or behavior is of a serious nature, contact the appropriate authorities and/or the JIEP coordinator immediately.

Some examples that would require immediate attention are:

- Illness or injury requiring medical attention, including psychological issues
- Arrest or police involvement
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Alcohol or drug usage
- Sexual behavior- including pornography and/or sexting
- Emotional issues, including depression and/or eating disorders

Issues of a serious nature, such as those listed above, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. JIEP will keep in mind the best interest of all parties involved, while adhering to applicable laws and rules in each situation.