

# Student-Parent Handbook

## 2023-2024



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*This Student Parent Handbook is a fluid document and SYA reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to amend, delete, or alter any of the contents of the Handbook as necessary. Should significant changes occur during the academic year, they will be communicated to families. This version was last revised on 2/28/2023. This handbook does not replace the contract of enrollment.*

# **SYA Mission Statement**

*School Year Abroad (SYA) is committed to promoting intercultural understanding and appreciation through the immersive adventure of fully engaging with different languages and peoples. SYA guides its students through a challenging curriculum focused on developing skills and cultural competencies for an increasingly interdependent world.*

## **Our Focus**

While students learn much by simply taking part in an experience abroad and living with a host family, SYA designs its programs to develop four key student skills:

- Critical and Creative Thinking - The ability to develop new ideas and challenge assumptions in situations with limited information and/or language skills.
- Intercultural Competence - The ability to understand different cultures and perspectives with increasing sophistication and adapt to new situations empathetically and appropriately.
- Language Proficiency - The ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages.
- Independence and Interdependence - The ability to be self-reliant and collaborate with others in a constructive way.

## **Our Approach**

SYA strives to take full advantage of our resources to provide the highest quality education. To that end, all of our programs are designed to be:

- Intentional - SYA programs are based on and designed to meet clear, achievable, and observable objectives.
- Place-Based - SYA programs are intricately tied to the surroundings, people, and culture of our host countries.
- Experiential - SYA programs are explicitly active and participatory and include major involvement in the outside community.
- Intercultural - SYA programs require active engagement in the local culture, developing perspective and empathy.

***SYA is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges***

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement**

For almost 60 years, our work at School Year Abroad has been built upon breaking down barriers — it is at the very core of our mission. We know that one of the best ways to fight discrimination and foster inclusion is with education, and that by introducing high school students to new perspectives, we prepare them for these important challenges.

With a community that extends across continents and cultures, we embrace the strength of diversity and we value the open exchange of ideas from lived experiences. We believe that the deepest learning requires collaboration among people who embody different backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives.

We also recognize that we have work to do, on both an institutional level and a personal level. SYA's goal is to have a faculty, staff, leadership group and curriculum that reflect our student body. We want our students to thrive in communities abroad that recognize and celebrate each of their unique identities. We know this presents a challenge, and it is one we welcome and commit to as we move forward.



# Welcome to School Year Abroad

The *Student-Parent Handbook* is designed to help families prepare for their upcoming SYA adventure. The Handbook outlines SYA's purpose, as reflected in its history and mission, summarizes the policies and procedures that guide all three campuses and answers frequently-asked questions regarding what many SYA alumni consider the most significant time in their educational careers.

Students and parents are expected to read, understand and comply with all provisions in this handbook; they are common to our campuses in France, Italy and Spain. SYA believes mutual respect and civility in all interactions are essential elements of a strong and healthy school community. Upon arriving overseas, the country-specific Resident Director (RD) will provide students with a supplement to this handbook covering local guidelines which will be discussed during the immersion unit. Students will be required to sign acknowledging they have reviewed the local supplement and will comply with its rules. A copy of the local supplement will be shared with parents at that time.

Unless otherwise stated, all policies, rules and expectations apply to students regardless of their age, and apply at all times, on and off campus.

No handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question regarding school policies. Further, the need may arise for SYA to revise, add or cancel policies. Therefore, SYA reserves the right to add new policies and to change or cancel existing policies at any time. The most up-to-date version of the Handbook can always be found on the SYA website starting in June ([www.sya.org](http://www.sya.org)).

It is important for enrolling families to be familiar with SYA policy before departure. To ensure this, SYA requires both students and parents to submit a signed form acknowledging they have reviewed the Handbook and recognizing it is their responsibility to understand the content and to comply with the information contained therein.

*NOTE: All SYA campuses follow local and national guidelines regarding COVID-19 Health and Safety and additional protocols to protect our students, faculty, staff and host families. Please bear in mind that any program modifications made throughout the school year will be communicated to families in a timely manner.*

## Communication

### Between parents and SYA

SYA finds that partnering with parents provides a strong basis for students to thrive in their experience abroad. Page one of the Handbook lists the names and contact information for several key administrators at SYA. We suggest parents print the contacts page and, once students are placed with a host family and assigned an advisor, fill in those two boxes as well. For questions prior to the start of the program, it's generally best to reach out to the home office. Once the student is in country, the first person the parent should contact is their child's advisor. If a parent is unable to reach the advisor or needs further information, the next person to contact is the Resident Director at the SYA campus. While the parents' instinct might be to call the SYA Home Office, the vast

majority of the time it is faster and more informative to speak directly once your child is overseas with the adults on the SYA campus who are in direct contact with students.

The Resident Director will typically send letters and other individualized communication. Additionally, throughout the year the Resident Director will email parents updates on school activities. Grade reports and advisor comments will be made available online. In an urgent matter, Resident Directors rely on the phone as the most effective way of reaching a parent.

**It is imperative for SYA to know how to reach parents at all times -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout the year -- in the case of an emergency. If parents are traveling or away from home, they should notify their child's Resident Director and provide any new or temporary contact information so that they can be reached. The Resident Director will act *in loco parentis* if parents cannot be reached in an emergency, but will make every effort to contact parents first. Likewise, parents can call the Resident Director 24/7 on their cell phone in the case of an emergency.**

For more information on medical emergencies and procedures, please read the Health, Safety and Emergency Management section of this Handbook.

#### Between parents and children

Email and communication applications such as FaceTime and WhatsApp are the most convenient and economical means of communication. Students are required to have a cell phone with a local number, so calling is another option; however, parents should not contact students during the school day. To leave an urgent message, parents can call the school number, and SYA will give the student a message to call back after classes. For any sensitive or urgent issue that may be upsetting to the student, SYA asks parents to first communicate with the Resident Director to ensure that the situation is fully understood and appropriate support is available as necessary. Families may also call students at their host family's home, but students are not to use the home phone to make long-distance calls.

#### Between SYA and Sending Schools

Schools sending students to SYA have access to the student's SYA grades and comments and receive other academic updates including transcripts, college counseling reports, discipline infractions and changes in student status. In addition, while most situations are resolved within the corresponding SYA campus, when concerns regarding a student arise, the SYA administration reserves the right to communicate with the sending school as deemed necessary by the SYA President or Resident Director.

#### Internet access

Students will have access to wi-fi at all SYA campuses. All host families have a cable or wireless connection to the internet. Families must not offer to pay for enhanced internet services in the host family's home.

### Frequency of communication with family and friends

The convenience of internet-based communication is clear; however, SYA discourages students from relying on it to correspond excessively with family and friends back home. Doing so will have a significant effect on the student's ability to learn the local language, keep up with coursework and integrate into the culture in a meaningful way. Students are expected to immerse themselves in a different culture and way of life. To do so, they will need to “let go” (at least temporarily) of their life at home. Although it might seem impossible at first, the sooner students can leave their daily life back home, the sooner they can concentrate on constructing a daily life in their adopted country, with all of its benefits.

SYA suggests speaking with family once a week on the phone or via computer (weekends or in the evening and not during school hours). Parents should refrain from sending frequent text messages to students. As text messaging and applications like WhatsApp have become more popular, students who are frequent texters have an increasingly difficult time engaging in the local culture.

Each campus has a cell phone policy detailed in the local handbook to which all students are expected to adhere. General cell phone policies are summarized in the Academics and Student Life sections of this handbook.

## **Student Support**

SYA provides students with a highly-individualized experience within the larger community of each campus. The SYA curriculum is designed to facilitate the integration of the individual into all aspects of the overall program. That said, it is inevitable for there to be challenging moments for students while adapting to a new school and integrating into a new peer group and family structure. It is important to understand that living in another country for an extended time tends to amplify problems of any kind and that SYA does not possess the level and extent of resources that students may have at their disposal at their sending schools. Listed below are the support systems we primarily rely on to assist our students.

### Advisory program

The SYA advising system is intended to give students support and counsel throughout the year, as well as to provide communication regarding student progress, academic and otherwise, to both the parents and sending school. Students are assigned a faculty advisor at the start of the program. While periodic advisory meetings are scheduled, students should feel free to seek out their advisor informally at any time. The advisor's role is essentially one of partnership, one who facilitates rather than resolves all issues.

Each SYA advisor will send an introductory letter to parents explaining their role and sharing observations about each student's first weeks at SYA. The advisor also provides written comments at certain points during the year. The dates for these comments are set in order to provide structured feedback on student progress; however, parents should feel comfortable reaching out to advisors at any time. Advisor comments provide information on how students are doing in school, in their relationship with the host family and their integration into the community.



### Academic support

Because of the diversity of SYA students' academic and language backgrounds, some students may need additional support in order to meet the demands of the curriculum. The instructor is the primary resource readily available for extra help if a student has difficulties in meeting the objectives of the course. Additional forms of assistance may include a peer-tutoring program, study groups and review sessions, but availability depends on the given year and the instructor. Private tutoring is rarely available and involves a financial arrangement not coordinated by SYA.

### College preparation

SYA employs a part-time college counseling liaison on each campus who works with students in the college selection and application process, oversees all standardized testing during the year and completes all necessary communication with the sending school college counseling staff. The SYA college counseling liaison will be in contact with the sending school college counseling staff as appropriate during the year.

The SYA college counseling liaison will prepare a mid-year report for seniors during a full-year program. The report will be forwarded to the sending school's college counseling office in February for submission to colleges. Additionally, the college counseling liaison and Resident Director will prepare a confidential report for each junior closing out the school year at SYA (full-year and spring semester juniors), summarizing the student's SYA experience, which will be sent to the sending school's college counseling office in June. This report is confidential and not shared with parents or students. Lastly, sending schools college counselors can refer to the teacher and advisor comments for all students who attended SYA.

SYA is a test center for the PSAT, SAT and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. SYA orders the PSATs for all juniors and sophomores, but students must register and pay for the SAT exams themselves online through their College Board account. For AP exams, SYA will provide students with a code for each AP exam they wish to take once they are in-country and interested students register themselves online through their College Board account but do not pay during registration. The student's incidental account is charged for the cost of PSAT and AP exams. The college counseling liaison stands ready to assist with any problems or questions students may have. SYA is *not* a test center for ACT. Standardized test practice and preparation is available to all students while enrolled at SYA through Methodize, an online learning platform.

### Mental health counseling

As noted in the Health, Safety and Emergency Management section of this Handbook, SYA does not employ mental health counselors onsite, but has a contract with the Truman Group (<http://www.truman-group.com>) to provide individual counseling for our students, via video conferencing, while overseas.

## Academics

*NOTE: A local or regional worsening of the pandemic may cause changes to academics, student life, travel, and extra-curricular opportunities during the academic year. We will provide updated information regarding these topics, as necessary.*

Students at SYA are part of an exciting program that deliberately and intensively focuses on both the cultures of the SYA host country and the challenges of the world at large. A demanding academic curriculum, a variety of extra-curricular opportunities, a supportive host family and an extensive educational travel program will engage students in meaningful ways and help them successfully integrate into a new school, community and country. Proficiency in the host-country language will be an essential part of achieving this level of integration; this goal is reflected in the importance SYA places on teaching and learning language in a variety of contexts.

### Policies

#### Access to Student's Records.

Enrolled students access their grades, comments, and attendance records through their student account online portal provided by SYA (called "MySYA"). Parents, SYA teachers, advisors and administrators are provided credentials to this portal to access the student's academic records. Sending schools are also provided with their students' reports (grades, comments, advisor letters) throughout the year and transcripts at the end of the program.

#### Required courses

Students are generally required to take six courses. English, the target language and Experiential Language courses are required for all students. Most students also take math and two elective courses. Enrolling students will be sent course descriptions and specific information about course requirements and selection soon after their enrollment in SYA.

#### Mathematics

All math courses offered at SYA have prerequisites, detailed in the course catalog. In addition, enrollment in any spring semester math course at SYA requires successful completion of the first semester of the same course at the equivalent or higher level at their sending school.

Students who have met their sending school's mathematics requirements may opt out of taking math at SYA during the enrollment process with all required permissions.

#### Courses taken outside of the SYA curriculum

On rare occasions a student may need to enroll in an online course. This should occur only if the course is not offered at SYA, as is most commonly the case for some levels of mathematics or U.S. History often necessary to meet graduation requirements at the sending school. Families considering this possibility needs to first contact the SYA Registrar in the spring prior to their child attending SYA. The sending school must be part of the conversation and approve the arrangement before it is submitted to the Resident Director for approval well in advance of the

start of the year. The family is responsible for the cost of any courses outside of the SYA curriculum; it is not covered by SYA tuition.

### Engagement With SYA Curriculum

We provide students with a thoughtful exploration of materials in our curriculum from different corners of culture, time, religion, geography and human experience. From that, students develop empathy, practice critical thinking, and strengthen and articulate what they believe in the face of sometimes opposing viewpoints. Therefore, students are required to engage in all aspects of SYA's curriculum and will not be granted alternative texts or assignments.

### Learning accommodations

SYA does not formally evaluate or determine accommodations for students with suspected learning disabilities.

SYA normally provides accommodations, to the extent possible, only for students who have specific documentation from their sending school. In order for students to receive extra time, the sending school must send SYA documentation highlighting the nature and level of accommodation that was in place before arrival. SYA will do what it can within its means to provide reasonable accommodations.

SYA cannot submit applications to the College Board in order to request first-time accommodations for students. If a student has applied or already received accommodations, they must supply SYA with their approval letter and number in order to receive the accommodations when taking standardized tests at SYA. SYA must receive copies of these important documents before the start of the school year.

### Attendance

SYA rules and consequences regarding attendance are simple. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, assemblies and required individual or group activities. Fieldwork and longer excursions are integral elements of the program and attendance is mandatory, unless explicitly noted otherwise. If a student is truly sick with a fever or other serious illness, the student must inform the host family, and then the host family must notify the school administrative assistant or Resident Director before the start of school. More detailed information is available in the "Missing School Because of Illness" section.

#### 1. Lateness

Tardiness is disruptive, and students may be penalized for repeated or excessive lateness. Students who arrive late to a class will be marked tardy. Faculty members will report all late arrivals and absences to the school administrative assistant. Three tardy arrivals are equal to one unexcused absence.

#### 2. Unexcused absences

If a student arrives more than 10 minutes late to any class, it will be considered an unexcused absence, and the student may not be allowed to enter as it is disruptive to the progress of the class. Students who miss a class are required to do the necessary work for that class. Students

who miss a test, quiz or paper deadline because of an unexcused absence risk receiving no credit for that work.

Consequences for unexcused absences vary. They may include loss of privileges related to curfew, school open door policy during free periods, independent travel and others. Referral to the Disciplinary Committee (DC) may be considered as well. Unexcused absences will be posted on the student's online account portal. Email notifications will be sent to the student, advisor, and parents. Normally, we alert the Dean of Students at the sending schools if there are consequences due to unexcused absences.

Four unexcused absences in a semester will result in a formal status review for that student, led by the Resident Director who will meet with the student, advisor and some of the student's teachers. The meeting will focus on the student's reasons for difficulties with attendance, as well as academic progress or lack thereof and any other factors that may be interfering with the student's success. Emphasis will focus on development of plans for ongoing improvement and accountability. As noted, consequences may include early curfews, loss of independent travel privileges if available, requirement to stay in school during free periods, or other sanctions. Referral to the Disciplinary Committee may also be considered. The student's parents will be notified before the status review, but do not participate in it. A written summary of the review will be posted on the student's portal, and notifications emailed to the student, parents, and advisor. SYA will notify the sending school as well.

An unexcused absence for an entire school day may result in automatic disciplinary probation status and possibly in a formal status review, depending on the number of classes missed. Disciplinary Probation in such cases means that further unexcused absences or violation of other SYA rules could result in dismissal from SYA, following a Disciplinary Committee meeting.

Students who miss a significant portion of the SYA experience, for medical or other reasons, may be faced with not earning credit for a marking period. In these instances, the Resident Director and faculty will consider the reasons for the absences and make a recommendation to the SYA President whose decision will be final.

Three tardies = One unexcused absence

One tardy of more than 10 minutes = One unexcused absence

First unexcused absence = Possible consequences (e.g., loss of privileges, see above)

Two or more unexcused absences = Consequences (e.g., loss of privileges, see above)

Four unexcused absences = Formal Status Review

Entire day of unexcused absences = Possible disciplinary probation

The Resident Director will make the final determination of whether an absence or tardy is excused.

SYA publishes each student's attendance record to their account on the portal (MySYA).

### 3. Missing school because of illness

If a student is sick on a school day, they must inform the host family and the host family must call the school at the beginning of the school day. If a student is ill enough to miss school, then they need to stay at home and get well. Students may not go to school on a day they called in sick. If a student is absent on a Friday or a weekday immediately preceding a holiday, they may not leave the host home that evening or participate in independent travel that weekend. SYA will communicate with the host parents to ensure their cooperation.

After a certain number of medical absences, determined by the Resident Director, a written excuse from a medical doctor may be required to document illness that mandates absence from school.

*NOTE: Under current SYA COVID-19 illness protocol any student who experiences any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 should immediately report their symptoms to their host family (if at home) or their Resident Director (if at school).*

### 4. Excused absence for individual commitment or travel

From time to time an exceptional opportunity (e.g. college interview, special conference or academic invitation, exchange or the like) may arise that warrants a request to miss one or more classes. The process for making such a request is as follows:

- Student speaks to the Resident Director about the request. The Resident Director will determine whether the request can be honored as an excused absence.
- If the permission is granted, it is the student's responsibility to be informed about work that will be missed before leaving and complete it before returning to class. In some cases, the Resident Director may provide a special form to facilitate this communication with faculty.

### 5. Absences immediately before or after vacation periods or holidays

Absences on school days immediately before or after vacation periods or holidays are automatically considered unexcused unless explicitly approved by the Resident Director well in advance of the absence. Parents should know that missing school on these days is almost never approved. Parents and students should refrain from booking travel on those days.

### 6. Early return for graduation

Only seniors whose sending school graduation is scheduled before the end of the SYA school year may arrange to return in time to participate in that ceremony. Normally, this means only one day before commencement. SYA does not allow students to return for the days of festivity that precede the commencement ceremony itself if SYA is still in session, and students must inform the Resident Director well in advance about their request for early departure.

## Evaluation & Reports

### Grading policy

SYA uses an A-F grading system, with “D-” being the minimum passing grade.

SYA does not assign “Pass/Fail” grades for credit courses.

SYA does not calculate grade point averages and does not rank students.

### Grading scale

A+	97-100	C+	77-79
A	94-96	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63

### Grade reports

Faculty members report on student progress two times per semester, at the mid-semester point in the form of a progress report (unofficial grades) and at the end of each semester (official grades which appear on the transcript). Teacher comments are provided simultaneously with grades. Families enrolled in the full-year program will hear from advisors four times during the year: during the first month of school, at the midpoint of the first semester, at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the school year (second semester). Families enrolled in the semester program will hear from advisors during the first month of attendance, and when grades are released.

Grade reports, with grades and comments, are published by faculty and made available to parents via the online SYA portal. As a school specializing in teaching world languages and providing an international immersion experience, SYA hires native speakers to teach the majority of the courses in addition to language; therefore, faculty member comments may be written in the native language of the faculty member; SYA does not translate these comments into English. Advisor comments may reflect the perspective of other faculty members in addition to reporting on important aspects of life outside of school.

Students receive the same grade reports that parents receive, and SYA encourages parents and their children to go over the grades together, as such dialogue can lead to honest discussion of grades and progress. If parents have further questions about the reports, they may find online translation tools useful. They may contact the student’s advisor or Resident Director for clarification. After the semester or year is over, if a student or parent has any questions regarding final SYA grades they must write to the Resident Director and copy the registrar. This request must be made within a maximum of three days after the final SYA report card has been published on their SYA account. After this time, the inquiry period is closed. If a student or parent wants to request additional time to submit late work due to medical reasons, a doctor’s note must be submitted to the Resident Director while the student is still at SYA. Sending schools have access to all academic reports and comments.

### Course credit/level

Most SYA courses carry one credit for a full-year enrollment, and half of one credit for a semester enrollment. A single-credit course meets for the equivalent of four times a week, for a minimum of 45 minutes per meeting, for the academic year. Nearly all SYA classes are taught at either the honors or Advanced Placement (AP) level. For information on the credit or level of a specific course, please consult the course offerings listed on our website ([www.sya.org](http://www.sya.org)). All AP classes at SYA are submitted to and approved by AP Course Audit. Both credit and level are indicated on the transcript.

It is important to note that while SYA is fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), SYA cannot dictate to the various sending schools which courses they shall grant credit in order to fulfill their graduation requirements. To ensure a smooth re-entry (if the student attends SYA as a sophomore or junior) or return for graduation (if the student attends SYA as a senior), all families are urged to make an appointment with a senior administrator at their sending school to discuss credits and graduation requirements before attending SYA.

### Course Changes

Changes to courses selected once the school year has started are rarely allowed; normally they are only arranged due to an adjustment in placement level. Students are committed to completing the courses in which they are enrolled. Full-year students enroll at the beginning of the school year in year-long elective courses and are not allowed to switch at any time, including at the semester.

Course reduction, while not a common option, may be approved by the Resident Director after discussion with the student, parent, sending school and SYA faculty involved.

### Credit for art and physical education

SYA does not offer full-year, for-credit courses in studio art or physical education. For students whose sending school requires them to participate in studio art and/or PE, SYA is able to help the student create a plan for fulfilling and tracking the requirements in an appropriate extra-curricular activity. It is the family's responsibility, however, to communicate with the sending school regarding what the requirement consists of and clearing with them the proposed activity at SYA. This must be arranged before the start of the year. At the end of the year, SYA will report on the student's progress with regard to the agreed-upon arrangement.

### Transcripts

Official transcripts are created only by the Home Office and are sent directly to the student's sending school. Transcripts are ready by late January for Fall Semester students, and mid-June for Spring and Full-Year students, but will not be released to sending schools until all outstanding bills have been paid to SYA. Any report of grades that SYA is called upon to send to colleges in the course of the year is unofficial and may have a different, less formal design and is labeled "Report Card".



The SYA transcript lists the course title, whether or not the course was taught in the target language, designated level if applicable (AP or H) and final grade and credit earned. The transcript, if applicable, also reports the date on which the student withdrew or was required to withdraw from SYA.

#### Academic probation

SYA is dedicated to supporting students to help them find success and thrive during their time abroad, and for this reason when a student is having significant academic struggles (has two grades below a C- or one F) they will be placed on academic probation and receive further support than they have already received. When a student is on academic probation they do not travel on the weekends and may be asked to spend more time at school after school, or arrive at home early in order to focus on their academics and receive extra support.

Resident Directors will send a letter to the student's parents and sending school explaining the probationary status. In addition, SYA will also notify the local host family so that they can support the student further. Even students earning one or no grade below "C-" may be placed on academic probation if the Resident Director believes it to be in the student's best interest.

#### Student withdrawal

In the event that a student chooses to withdraw from SYA for any reason, parents must submit a Student Withdrawal Form indicating the date of official withdrawal and detailed travel plans and permissions for departure. Please note that the parent is responsible for any travel expenses that result from a withdrawal, as well as understanding the terms of their tuition reimbursement coverage, if any. It is SYA's policy that students who withdraw from the program return to their home country as soon as possible. Students may not remain with their host family after withdrawal.

Once all remaining tuition, fees and travel costs are paid, SYA will issue an official transcript, noting date of withdrawal and including any completed credits earned. Credits will be granted only for completion of full semesters. SYA does not report the reason for withdrawal or circumstances leading to withdrawal on report cards or transcripts.

Withdrawal from the program is permanent. A student may not return to the program after withdrawal. Upon approval of a request for voluntary withdrawal, the SYA Resident Director or the SYA President will communicate with the sending school that the student has withdrawn and will provide the reason for withdrawal. It is important to note that once the student is back home, the SYA-provided overseas health insurance is no longer valid.

### **Use of technology at school**

#### Cell phones

While there will be occasional times when students use cell phones for class, the presence of cell phones in the learning environment can create a significant distraction. It should be noted that cell phone use in the classroom at SYA is strictly prohibited unless explicitly requested and

permitted by the instructor. Otherwise, phones should remain off and put away. No blanket permission will be given for consistent use in the classroom. Inability to follow this rule may result in disciplinary action, including referral to the Disciplinary Committee.

### Computers

Students may use a computer in class only when explicitly asked to do so by their instructor. SYA does not grant blanket permission for computer use, except in the rare case of an approved accommodation for a demonstrated and documented need. This rule also applies to note taking and electronic dictionaries. Students are expected to fully engage in class without the constant distraction of a device with an internet connection.

For more information on SYA's technology usage policies, please reference the appendices.

- SYA's Internet and Electronic Communications Usage Policy can be found in Appendix A
- SYA's Social Media Comments and Participation Policy can be found in Appendix B

## Student Life

*NOTE: A local or regional worsening of the pandemic may cause changes to academics, student life, travel, and extra-curricular opportunities during the academic year. We will provide updated information regarding these topics, as necessary.*

During the first days and weeks of school, the Resident Director, advisor and faculty will provide formal orientation sessions and activities to help students familiarize themselves with SYA. They will place students in the appropriate language and math classes, explain and clarify rules and procedures, assist students with the experience of living with a host family and appreciating cultural differences and similarities, and guide them in ways to ensure as much as possible their health, safety and well-being. The Student Life section of the Handbook is designed to provide a glimpse of what daily life might look like -- from riding public transportation to eating at a local cafeteria.

SYA also appoints a faculty or staff member to be in charge of both seeking out and coordinating opportunities in which students can participate in the local community. This person is an excellent resource for students either looking to get involved in a particular activity or in need of fresh ideas for new extracurricular activities to try.

### General Information

#### Cell phones

All SYA students are required to have a local cell phone number for daily use and emergency contact. SYA recommends that students bring with them an unlocked smartphone and purchase a local SIM card and a suitable plan once they are in their SYA destination city. As technology evolves quickly, electronic or dual SIM options may be available for some newer smartphones but families are encouraged to consult with their phone manufacturers. A less practical alternative is for students to purchase upon arrival a local phone with prepaid minutes. The price of a new modest cell phone ranges from the equivalent of \$50 to \$150. The Resident Director will advise students about local options during orientation, and host families will take the student within the first few days after arrival to help them get set up with a new cell phone number.

Responsible and thrifty use of a cell phone abroad affords convenience and security, but excessive use dilutes the experience of living abroad, just as excessive reliance on computers to maintain contact with friends back home does. Successful SYAers find that speaking to their parents once a week works well.

#### Time zone information

During most of the year, European time is six hours later than Eastern Standard Time in the U.S.; therefore, a call placed at 8 p.m. in New York rings at 2 a.m. in Rennes, Viterbo or Zaragoza.

### Computers

Students are required to bring either a laptop computer or tablet with them to SYA for word processing, internet research, and accessing the SYA Learning Management System. While the SYA campuses have some backup computers onsite, students should not rely on these exclusively.

Most new electronics come with a universal AC converter that can handle 220V, so students will need only a plug adapter (which can be bought locally for the equivalent of a few dollars). Students bringing a device with a grounded prong should also bring a 3-to-2-prong adapter as it is not so easy to find locally. The device's "input" limits should appear on the back of the little box on the cord.

Students should pack all cables/adapters and software related to any external devices they may bring with them as part of their carry-on luggage.

Students should bring a photocopy of their receipt along with their documents to prove to customs officials that they are "importing" used equipment for personal use, not bringing in new equipment to be sold.

### Internet

All SYA campuses have wi-fi, and all host family homes have an internet connection.

### Internet Streaming and Computer Games

Watching TV series or movies in English and playing video games are significant distractions from the local culture. SYA encourages students to avoid spending time on a screen and instead study, engage with the host family and take the opportunity to interact with others in the local community.

### Mail

Students should receive first-class letters at the address of the school, not at their host family's home. Letters should be addressed to "School Year Abroad" with the student's name on the envelope, so it is not inadvertently opened by SYA staff.

### Packages

Almost anything parents might want to send in a "care package" can be purchased locally. While students will certainly be happy to receive expressions of love and affection, parents should bear in mind that shipping costs for things available locally can be substantial.

- Packages should be sent to the school's address, with the student's name clearly marked. Parents should use caution and common sense when sending packages. Many items that parents often send are easily found in Europe and may be less expensive locally, including vitamins and cold weather clothing. It is illegal to send prescription medicines. Sending food or over-the-counter medicines runs the risk of customs returning the package to the sender, postage due. Worse, the student may have to pay significant customs or delivery fees at the time of delivery, often interrupting classes to do so. Parents should keep in mind that a package may take some time to be delivered

or may be opened in transit. Whatever is being sent should be able to stand the test of time. Receiving packages is particularly difficult in Spain. It is best to check directly with the Spain school administration before sending anything.

- Parents should read the Medication Management Policy (See Appendix C) and keep in mind that sending prescription medication through the mail is illegal and therefore not permitted. SYA maintains an up-to-date list of frequently used medications that are unavailable in each host country. Prescriptions from outside the host country are not valid.
- Parents should not insure packages for large amounts, since customs duties are based on the package's declared value. Sending jewelry, computers or other electronic appliances may require the purchase receipt to be presented at customs and can result in significant delays, substantial customs charges, as well as possible theft and enormous headaches.
- Many packages need to be retrieved from customs or the post office and may require significant paperwork and time. This has increasingly become a large burden for both students and staff.
- The most economical way to send small packages is by International Parcel Post (USPS). Other options include UPS, FedEx or DHL. Please note that USPS cannot be used to send packages to Spain -- only UPS, FedEx or DHL.

### Banking

Foreign minor students are not allowed to open their own bank accounts. SYA recommends that students bring a debit card from a U.S. bank for cash withdrawals. Since ATM cards provide an easy and economical way of obtaining cash in Europe, all parents should set up a joint ATM account with their child. Parents are advised to ask the issuing bank about withdrawal fees and ease of use of a debit card versus a credit card abroad. Parents (and other relatives or friends) can make dollar deposits in the U.S. for no fee, and the student can easily withdraw foreign currency from most ATMs. Many banks offer accounts with a monthly withdrawal limit, and parents can easily monitor spending online. ATM cards must be compatible with the largest networks of ATM machines, such as CIRRUS or NYCE. Students need to make sure that the PIN is a number, not a word or series of letters, and does not begin with 0 (zero). If the ATM card is new, it must be activated before the student arrives abroad as some cards cannot be activated through foreign ATMs.

Debit cards should be the type that functions both at an ATM (to withdraw cash) and as a credit card (to make purchases), as it offers the most convenience and flexibility. Due to strict anti-fraud measures, families should make sure to inform their bank very clearly that the withdrawals (on ATM) and charges (on credit cards) will take place abroad.

### Budgeting

At SYA the major essentials are taken care of: books for school, laundry, daily transportation to school, all expenses on school trips, and room and board for every day of the school year (including vacation if the student stays with their host family) will always be covered, either by tuition or by the deposit parents make to the Incidental Account. As a result, a real need for additional "spending

money” is limited. Students will have to purchase school supplies such as pens and notebooks, as well as their own toiletries. These personal items do not “come with the house,” and students must not ask their host family to supply them. Students will also want some money for snacks and entertainment. An average weekly budget is the equivalent of about \$25 to \$50 per week in Europe. Cell phone charges will be another individual expense. Additional money should be budgeted for independent travel expenses in the case that the student is approved to travel independently by the school, and the family approves independent travel as well.

Lavish spending can alienate students from each other and from their host families, and will not necessarily enrich their experience. It is important that prior to departure, families discuss expectations for student spending.

While not mandatory, it is recommended that students arrive with €50 (EURO) so that they are able to purchase incidental items prior to visiting an ATM. **Do not bring U.S. dollars, as they have become increasingly difficult and expensive to exchange.** SYA will not exchange U.S. dollars nor accept personal checks from students except in the case of an emergency.

#### Student lunch

Student lunch is always provided for at SYA. Host families provide students with lunch on weekends and holidays. SYA provides for lunch on school days, at a nearby school cafeteria. On school travel days, students will either eat together at a restaurant or be provided money to buy their own lunch.

#### Local transportation

Options for transportation vary from school to school. Students may take public transportation, ride with one of their host parents to school or walk. Commutes range from five to a maximum of 45 minutes. Depending on the kind of local transportation available, SYA will provide monthly passes to allow students to commute to and from school and to get around the city. In some situations students opt to use bicycles to get to school. Additional information about bicycle riding and other physical activities can be found in Appendix D. **Students may not use UBER or other ride-sharing services and may not drive an automobile or motorized cycle of any sort. Hitchhiking is not allowed. Riding in a car is only allowed if driven by host family members or individuals previously authorized by SYA.**

#### Apparel Standards

SYA students should wear clothing that is neat, clean and in good repair. Clothing should be appropriate for the activities in which a student is participating and should be free of culturally offensive or suggestive words, logos or pictures. In some communities, culturally appropriate dress for someone an SYA student’s age may be more conservative than what they would expect in the United States. Resident Directors will share standards of dress during orientation in-country. If a student does not follow the standards set out by the Resident Director, the Resident Director reserves the right to send students home to change their clothes.

### Weekends

Students spend most weekends in their host city, though school trips may encompass all or part of a weekend. During weekends students will have time to spend with their host family, visit with their SYA classmates and other friends, go shopping or to the movies, go out in the evening and do their homework.

If a host family decides to travel over the weekend, the student normally goes with them. If a student chooses not to travel with their family on the weekend, they must make arrangements with the host family and the Host Family Coordinator or Resident Director to stay with another family, as students are not allowed to stay at their host family home overnight without the family present.

On certain predetermined dates, students may travel outside of their host city for the day, the weekend or holiday. In all cases, as stated above, an independent travel form will be required. Please see section on independent travel.

### Curfew

Each SYA campus sets curfews for both weeknights as well as weekends, evenings as well as mornings. Students are expected to respect the curfews, returning home on time in the evening and leaving home at an appropriate time in the morning. On school nights (usually Sunday through Thursday), students will be required to be home with their host family by a certain hour, in time for dinner and with sufficient time after dinner both to visit with the family and do their homework. Weekend curfews will be explained on site. Curfews are also in effect at all times when traveling, and during school breaks, except in the company of the students' own parents or guardians or their host parents.

### Vacations

Students are not permitted to return home while attending SYA, including over winter break, as it creates a significant disruption in the student experience abroad. Rare exceptions are only made for personal, medical or family reasons. Parents must petition through a formal request for leave at least 1 month in advance and the request must be approved by the Resident Director. Any student who travels home without receiving prior permission will be presumed to have withdrawn from the program and will not be permitted to return.

### Visits from home

If planned carefully and thoughtfully, visits from home can be a great experience for students and a way for them to show off their new home abroad. For families, it can be rewarding to see their child building independence and showcasing their language skills. In order to make the experience as beneficial as possible and to avoid unnecessary disruption to the experience abroad, families agree to the following guidelines:

- Parents refrain from visiting before the following dates: December 1 for fall semester/full-year students and spring break (dates vary depending on the campus) for spring semester students.
- Parents notify the Resident Director of their visit well in advance.



- Students may not spend the night with their parents on a school night.
- Students will not be allowed to miss class in order to visit with their family. Any missed classes are subject to SYA's attendance policy.

Students traveling outside of their host city to meet family may do so only with the appropriate permissions in place on the independent travel form.

## **The Homestay**

Living with a host family is a crucial component of the SYA experience. Many SYA graduates consider their relationship with their host family the most memorable part of their year abroad and maintain that relationship for life.

The host family will help students to become involved in the community, provide authentic means for learning about a new country and culture, and countless opportunities to develop language proficiency that are not possible in the classroom or on one's own. By participating fully in the host family life, students will come in direct contact with valuable cultural, sociological, personal, political and practical aspects of life in the country that complement and complete the SYA academic program.

### Host family selection and placement

SYA carefully selects host families that reflect the wide and rich diversity of family situations in-country. The host family is considered an extension of both SYA and the student's own family and is responsible for providing an appropriate level of support at all times, while also holding the student accountable for their behavior. The host family is expected to report to the Resident Director any concerns that arise, as well as any violations of family expectations or SYA rules. Each SYA campus has a host family coordinator whose duties include: carefully matching students with an appropriate host family, ensuring the safety of the dwelling, building and maintaining strong relationships with the host families in their community, providing orientation and guidelines for both the students and families, and serving as intermediary should problems arise between the student and family.

Many SYA host families have been hosting for several years, and when a new family approaches SYA, it is typically because they have a friend, neighbor or family member who has enjoyed their SYA hosting experience. All prospective host families are interviewed by the host family coordinator in their homes, and once approved, they are provided with appropriate orientation, training and supervision and must pass a background check in their own country. Host families are also visited by either the Host Family Coordinator or the Resident Director periodically.

Host family assignments are made by the host family coordinator on the basis of criteria appropriate to SYA, in consultation with the Resident Director, using information provided by the student, their parents, host families and other interested parties. Informal feedback regarding their host family is obtained from students during the first few weeks after their arrival and throughout their stay, and formal student evaluations of their host families are done at the end

of their program. Once host family placements are made for the coming year, the only changes made before the beginning of the school year are for documented medical reasons or other extraordinary circumstances. After that, there is a process for investigating the need for and making any necessary host family changes during the school year. The host family coordinator, in consultation with the Resident Director and faculty advisors, monitors and assesses all host family-student relationships for the entire year.

SYA organizes several opportunities throughout the school year for host families to meet with and provide feedback to SYA staff, including picnics, orientation meetings and evening events. In addition, the host families are invited to many SYA social activities in order to see their host child outside the home and to feel part of the greater SYA community.

### Living with a Host Family

Students should understand that their assigned family will likely differ in interesting ways not only from their own family back home but from the host families of other SYA students. Students are encouraged to take an active interest in the lives of their host family members and to use the local language as a means of communicating with them.

As students take up residence with their host families, it is very important that they are adaptable and show respect to their new family, and that the family does the same. This will enrich their entire experience and the experience of their hosts. The host family will expect their student to use common courtesy that is the norm for well-mannered family members everywhere.

Students will be expected to:

- Abide by their family's rules and standards of honesty, punctuality, orderliness, communication and openness.
- Keep their room clean. Make their bed and pick up their clothing. In European culture children's bedrooms are considered to be an extension of the whole house and it is very important that they are kept in order.
- Be polite! A little politeness goes a long way. They should say good morning (audibly) to all family members. Always say good night to everyone; always say where they are going and when they'll be back. Always say goodbye when they leave and hello when they return.
- Adopt family norms for greeting, kissing and hugging (only if comfortable).
- Respect the hours their family keeps -- hours of meals, of leaving and returning home, of going to bed, etc.
- Inform their family in advance (by phone if necessary) of any change in plans that may cause them to miss a meal or return home late. If possible, students should give their family such information a day in advance.
- Initiate and respond to verbal cues with a sincere and respectful tone.
- Eat meals with their family in a culturally appropriate manner.

- Limit the use of electronic technology in the home (cell phone, internet use, iPads) to maximize contact with their family, build stronger and lasting relationships, and use the local language.
- Practice energy consciousness, understanding their collective role as global consumers of precious, limited resources.

It's important for students to remember that they went overseas to adapt to a new way of life. Students should be humble, self-effacing and above all, considerate of everyone in their new family. Students shouldn't be afraid to laugh at themselves as they stumble over words and make mistakes. Once the students begin to relax and enjoy the process of getting to know their new family, the family will relax too!

At the same time, students shouldn't be afraid to be themselves in conversation. They should say what they think, ask about what they don't understand and shouldn't hesitate to make a joke. Students don't have to agree with their family's political opinions or their views about the United States. If a student hears something they disagree with, or something they know is inaccurate ("All American families live in large houses"), the student can politely take issue. It is the SYA student's job to represent their sense of country fairly and accurately. Everyone should be able to accept legitimate criticism, but also feel they can defend their society when they think it's appropriate.

#### Discretion and generosity with the host family

Experience has shown that the ways in which SYA students talk about and spend money can have a significant impact on the quality of their relationship with their host families. To avoid misunderstandings and to help ensure that this crucial relationship is as healthy and happy as possible, SYA invites students and parents to read and discuss the observations offered below.

Since SYA seeks host families who are loving and generous, without regard to socio-economic status, students will find themselves in families ranging from wealthy to modest. Those who have limited discretionary income always budget very carefully. Even the more fortunate families tend to watch expenditures more carefully than many American families. Hopefully, SYA students will adopt equally frugal and discreet habits.

SYA's goal is for students to live respectfully within their adopted culture and to help erase the stereotype of American materialism that is often seen in the media. Students are urged to live modestly and be generous and thoughtful with their host families. Lavish presents are not necessary or appropriate, but students who bring home an occasional flower or pastry, remember birthdays or offer to purchase and cook a special meal go a long way. On the other hand, those who never seem to have money for toothpaste or school supplies, never bring home a gift, and yet regularly go out for movies and pizza or travel independently could be labeled as self-indulgent and inconsiderate.

The SYA experience is a great opportunity for students to learn to manage money by discussing appropriate spending levels with parents, setting a weekly budget and sticking to it. It is

frequently the students who make the decision to get by on a little less who integrate themselves most successfully and have the richest host family experiences.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

SYA believes that the greatest success of a study abroad experience depends in part on students' full engagement in both the local community and the host country. "Engagement" in an SYA host city can include athletics, community service, tutoring, enrichment classes, and the like. The level of success and happiness SYA students experience results directly from their ability to adapt to, be informed by and participate actively in the host culture. SYA consciously designs opportunities and classroom teaching to enrich that experience.

SYA's curriculum, schedule and commitment of resources reflect a primary interest in helping the student understand and become an active participant in the local community. For that reason, each SYA campus will organize only a few U.S.-style after-school activities, such as the yearbook or talent shows. There are almost no SYA athletic teams, as it is preferable for students to play on local teams, using the host country language to communicate with their teammates.

An extra-curricular coordinator at each school will help students investigate, find and develop opportunities to become involved in activities of interest to them. SYA has set funds, per student, to cover the cost of extra-curricular enrollment expenses. Each SYA campus has a different requirement and model for tracking student involvement in extra-curricular activities that will be explained during the opening weeks of school.

## **Travel**

*NOTE: School-sponsored and independent travel plans may be affected due to a change in local conditions, such as a worsening of the pandemic, or restrictions imposed by applicable regulatory agencies.*

SYA believes that travel can be a transformative experience, providing students with a valuable opportunity to see themselves, their family and communities, and their native countries through a different lens. Travel, therefore, is an integral part of SYA's curriculum and takes on many shapes and sizes throughout the year. There are day-long excursions, overnights and multi-day trips in which the students will participate with the school, with host families and with friends.

### Educational travel

With classes focused on the local or national culture and language, SYA seeks ways to integrate classroom learning with learning opportunities outside the classroom by means of educational travel. SYA travel includes both large and small group travel, and all SYA school trips are adequately staffed by faculty to provide for the supervision of the students and promote safety conditions for all participants. The cost of required school travel, including all meals, is included in the tuition. When practical, groups of two students (occasionally more) can submit rooming requests for school trips. The Resident Director will try to accommodate rooming requests but may be constrained by

hotel room availability, the combination of requests and other limitations. Students are roomed with other students of the same gender as indicated on their passports. However, in an effort to promote inclusivity and belonging in relation to their gender identity, the Resident Director will try to accommodate students who submit a request to room in a gender-neutral room. Students considered will be those who are non-binary, have transitioned, are transitioning, or questioning their gender identity. The approval process in this case would include students and their parents signing their agreement in the pertinent form. Students cannot room on school trips with someone with whom they are romantically involved.

### Independent travel

When a student travels outside of the host city, beyond a predetermined radius at each campus and unaccompanied by an adult, for any reason other than an approved part of fieldwork for school, we refer to this as Independent Travel. Independent Travel can lead to greater immersion in the host country culture, increased language proficiency and a furthering of the student's educational goals. But Independent Travel takes maturity and responsibility; it is an earned privilege, not a right. It takes time for students to adjust and develop the navigational, linguistic, and intercultural skills needed, therefore, Independent Travel is not an option early on during the program. Students who are in good academic standing, working toward proficiency of the host country's language, sufficiently connected with their host family and able to make healthy and appropriate decisions when engaged in independent activities may earn, over time, the privilege to travel independently during pre-determined weekends or breaks.

Students wishing to engage in Independent Travel may only do so with written permission from both the Resident Director and the student's parents or legal guardians. In addition, students must sign the Independent Travel form, formally acknowledging their responsibilities. These forms and procedures must be repeated for each Independent Travel request including day travel outside the home city. Expenses related to Independent Travel are not covered by SYA.

### Student Independent Travel guidelines:

- Each time a student leaves the home city without adult supervision or away from the host family, SYA requires written permission and release of responsibility from the student's parents or legal guardians.
- Students applying for permission to travel independently overnight must plan to travel in groups of two or three. Students are not granted permission to stay overnight alone.
- On rare occasions, including but not limited to situations in which a student is meeting an adult family member or other SYA-approved party, students may be granted permission to travel alone if there is someone waiting for them at their destination point. Parental permission, as well as the approval of the Resident Director, is required in these cases.
- International travel on school breaks will not be permitted unless a student is accompanied by their parent or guardian, or with their host parents with prior approval of the student's parents. Any exception to travel with other adults needs to be approved in advance by all parties.

- SYA does not accept blanket permissions. SYA does not accept permission by phone or email message unless the email contains the appropriately signed, scanned permission forms.
- Students may not use UBER, Bla Bla Car or any other ride-sharing service.
- Students may not use Airbnb or similar services. The accommodation must have a front desk that is staffed 24-hours.
- Not all hotels allow unaccompanied minors to stay on their property. Students must obtain, as one of the conditions for approval of their independent travel, a written acknowledgement from the hotel, including the guests names, ages and check-in/check-out dates, stating that they will be allowed to stay at the hotel without an adult.
- Students must complete a number of steps prior to securing permission for each independent travel instance, including confirming eligibility, planning logistics and transportation, obtaining hotel reservations or written invitations as applicable. The Resident Director reviews plans proposed by the student to make sure they are well conceived, safe, complete and feasible. Written signatures are required from the student's parents, designated advisor and Resident Director. Detailed instructions as well as submission deadlines will be explained on site.
- Students must follow the plans that have been approved. If circumstances require students to alter their plans in any way, they must communicate with the Resident Director and their parents/legal guardians immediately to secure permission for the change and to provide updated contact information.
- All final approval of independent travel is at the discretion of the Resident Director and may be revoked at any time and for any reason. SYA does not accept responsibility for lost travel expenses in these cases.

A copy of the Informed Consent and Release form parents and students will need to sign when or if they elect to participate in Independent Travel can be found in Appendix E. All other Independent Travel forms are available through the administration office at each SYA campus.

## **Health, Safety and Emergency Procedures**

Care for the physical and emotional health, safety and well-being of all students is a top priority for SYA. During orientation and throughout the year, SYA will provide students with the necessary information to take care of themselves, behave in ways that are culturally appropriate and avoid situations that can be dangerous. Students, however, need to do their part as well by adhering to the guidelines presented in this document.

## **Health**

### Required Immunizations

The vast majority of adults in France, Italy and Spain are vaccinated against Covid-19. Please note that at the time of publication, the regulatory agencies in SYA host countries do not require their

residents (including host families and SYA faculty) or non-residents (including students) to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

While no longer a requirement, SYA strongly recommends all students be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 (primary series and most recent booster available) but reserves the right to reinstate the vaccine requirement if the destination country regulatory agency requirement is reintroduced and/or the conditions worsen.

Aside from COVID-19, families are strongly encouraged to follow the CDC guidelines for recommended immunizations for the country in which they will study, found in the Traveler's Health section of the CDC website.

#### Access to medical care

Medical assistance is readily available in all SYA host cities. The Resident Director or assistant will arrange routine medical appointments as needed and will implement established protocols to respond to any medical emergencies that may arise, including those requiring evacuation. Each SYA campus keeps on file all the medical information provided by each student's family and physician.

#### Health notification to parents

The Resident Director will notify parents as soon as possible whenever a student suffers a significant injury or serious illness. SYA does not allow elective surgery such as the extraction of wisdom teeth without parents' authorization. Even in an emergency, SYA makes every effort to contact parents or others they designate before proceeding with surgery or other treatment. During the enrollment process, parents are required to sign a medical consent form allowing SYA to arrange for appropriate care in case parents cannot be reached.

#### Insurance coverage for medical expenses

SYA provides health insurance for all students that covers most medical expenses incurred at their SYA country, during the SYA school year. It includes coverage for emergency evacuation. The policy does not cover pre-existing treatment received in the U.S., and coverage for pre-existing conditions is limited. If payment is required, students are expected to pay at the time of service. This insurance is only in effect when the student is overseas and enrolled in SYA.

#### Mental health

SYA does not employ mental health counselors onsite, but has a contract with The Truman Group (<http://www.truman-group.com>) to provide individual counseling for students via video conferencing, while overseas. These services include communication with parents and doctors back home. The Truman Group also provides school-wide support and/or training as determined by the Resident Director.

SYA's provided insurance will cover up to \$1,000 for mental health counseling while overseas and enrolled at SYA. With the Truman Group, this covers approximately 5 sessions. After the limit has been reached, parents have the option to continue on their own.



Another option some students have found effective is to continue counseling via video-conference with their mental health professional from home.

## **Temporary Medical Leave**

On occasion, a student may need to take a medical leave from SYA; the sections below describe situations that warrant a medical leave. Requests for medical leave may be initiated by parents, the student or the school administration. SYA will make the final determination regarding whether temporary medical leave is granted. Because of the place-based nature of the SYA program, SYA cannot provide extended medical leave. If a leave extends to more than 30 calendar days, SYA will likely recommend withdrawal.

In the event of a requested leave, the parent or guardian submits a “Request for Medical Leave” form documenting the nature of the leave, expected treatment (if available) and travel plans for the student’s return home. Upon approval of a request for temporary medical leave, the SYA Resident Director will communicate with the sending school that the student is on temporary medical leave. SYA will not provide details or share confidential information with the sending school, but rather will refer the sending school to the parents for any questions they may have. During the medical leave, students may be asked to continue coursework remotely and may have their workload modified.

If the student plans on returning to the program, parents must provide the name and contact information of the treating healthcare provider and sign a waiver allowing the SYA administration to speak directly with the provider. As a condition of return, SYA requires a letter from the provider stating that they believe the student is stable and fit to return to the program. SYA has the ultimate discretion on whether the student may return.

### General medical leave

If during the course of the school year a student is unable to continue to participate in the program because of significant physical illness, psychological distress, and/or insufficient functional skills to succeed as an SYA student (e.g., physical, mental, emotional), a temporary medical leave to return home for treatment may be requested.

If during a medical leave the student begins treatment using new or modified medications, the student must remain on leave until a physician determines the safety and effectiveness of the treatment. SYA faculty and staff are not trained to provide adequate monitoring or evaluation of the safety and effectiveness of prescribed medications. It is important to note that the SYA-provided overseas health insurance can be used only while the student is overseas -- it will not be in effect while a student is at home.

### Medication management leave – starting or discontinuing medications

Please note SYA will not allow a student to start a new psychotropic or controlled medication while abroad. There are risks involved and SYA faculty and staff do not have the medical training to monitor possible side effects in starting these types of medications. A student who must start a

new psychotropic or controlled medication or requires a significant change in dosage needs to take an official Medical Leave and return to their home country for at least 2-4 weeks depending on the type of medication, until their doctor is confident that the student can take the new medication safely.

Parents must notify the appropriate Resident Director, in writing, immediately should the decision be made for a student to discontinue use of a controlled and/or psychotropic prescription medication. Depending on the specific medication and discontinuation plan, SYA may require the student to take a medical leave and return home for at least two weeks if a medical professional has advised on the need for the student to be monitored during or after discontinuing the medication. It is important to note that neither SYA faculty and staff nor host families are trained to provide adequate monitoring and evaluation of the withdrawal process from medication.

## **Safety**

### Safe school environment

SYA is committed to providing a work, school and host family environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive or disruptive, including sexual harassment. In particular, faculty, staff, volunteers, students and host family members are prohibited from engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct against any other member of the school community. Actions, words, jokes or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or presentation, etc., will not be tolerated.

Any harassment that creates a hostile, intimidating and/or offensive work, academic or host family environment also is prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary action. Anyone who experiences or witnesses sexual or other harassment should report it immediately to their advisor, a faculty member or the Resident Director. Students can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation. All allegations of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated and the appropriate corrective action will be taken to address the problem. A copy of SYA's Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy can be found in Appendix F.

### SYA Sanctuary Policy

Sanctuary is a non-disciplinary response to situations in which student health or safety is compromised. SYA recognizes that students sometimes make unhealthy decisions and put their safety and well-being at risk. Understanding that there is a reluctance to ask for help if disciplinary action could follow, the Sanctuary Policy allows a student to reach out proactively without invoking a disciplinary response (for more information, go to pp. 39-40).

## **Emergency Management**

### Emergency procedures

Students are informed of and trained in SYA emergency procedures during orientation and as necessary throughout the year by the Resident Director. In the event of any emergency, the

Resident Director will provide regular updates to parents, host families, students and faculty to promote a safe, informed response by the community.

Another important asset in responding to an actual emergency situation is SYA's Emergency Response Team comprising the SYA President, Chief Financial Officer, School Operations Administrator and the appropriate Resident Director. This group gathers quickly, assesses needs, implements appropriate responses and communicates with parents, students and sending schools as necessary.

SYA constantly monitors both U.S. government sites, such as [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) and [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov), and receives daily notices from the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC). In addition, Resident Directors receive special bulletins from the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and from local contacts and law enforcement agencies, notifying them of any safety concerns.

#### Student preparedness

All students are asked to register with the U.S. State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, known as STEP. Enrollees receive important information directly from the Embassy about safety conditions in their designated country via travel alerts and warnings. This feature helps participants make informed decisions about travel and helps the U.S. Embassy contact students in an emergency, whether it is a natural disaster, civil unrest or family emergency. Parents may also enroll in STEP to monitor safety conditions for a specific destination. STEP is a free service to all U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to register their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. <https://step.state.gov>

SYA requires students to be reachable on short notice and at all times. Students must have a cell phone with a local number to keep communications open outside the school setting. SYA provides Emergency Contact cards including host family's address and phone numbers, as well as contact information for the school, Resident Director and designated "safe haven." In addition, the card lists local emergency numbers such as fire, police and ambulance. During orientation, Resident Directors detail their campus-specific emergency procedures to all students.

Throughout the school year, SYA provides best practice guidance to the students about being aware of their surroundings and how to stay safe and enjoy self-planned trips. This includes watching and listening to local news reports, being aware of travel delays and conducting themselves discreetly so as not to draw unwarranted attention to the fact that they are U.S. citizens overseas. In addition, safety drills are rehearsed at school in order to practice emergency procedures. SYA is in regular contact with the U.S. Consul in the local area, and we receive alerts and updates from the U.S. Embassy in the host country.

#### Emergency notification

SYA students are required at all times to have on them a charged phone with sufficient credit for making calls. SYA maintains a list of all student cell phone numbers, and in the case of an emergency, this is SYA's best means for quickly reaching the students.

In the case of an emergency, students and parents may reach their Resident Directors by way of cell phone -- throughout the school year, day and night. If the Resident Director knows they will be without cell service for an extended period of time, the Resident Director will designate a responsible faculty member to take emergency calls. In this case, the Resident Director informs students, host families, parents and the home office of the on-call faculty member's name and contact information.

While in a general emergency SYA reaches out to the parent body by email, in an individual situation, the Resident Director will call the parents. **Parents must ensure SYA knows how to reach them at all times -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout the year. If parents are traveling or away from home, they should notify the student's Resident Director to provide alternative contact information as needed. The Resident Director will act in *loco parentis* if parents cannot be reached in an emergency, but will make every effort to contact parents first.**

## **Discipline Philosophy and Procedures**

SYA's discipline philosophy is based on a goal of providing a safe and secure environment for students in which they may take full advantage of the unique structure of the school. SYA's discipline philosophy focuses on behaviors that compromise student health and safety, and those behaviors that negatively affect other members of the SYA community: other students, faculty and staff, host families, and the broader communities in which the students live and travel. SYA expects students to behave in a way that reflects positively on themselves and the school by being kind, supportive, thoughtful and above all, safe.

SYA is not a boarding school nor a day school. School rules apply at all times during a student's participation at SYA. This environment may involve significantly more independence, risk and responsibility than some students are used to; therefore, a student's level of earned independence is always linked to their adherence to these rules. If at any time during the year it becomes clear to the SYA administration, through the discipline process or a formal status review, that continued participation in the program does not meet SYA health, safety or discipline standards, a student may be asked to leave the program.

SYA responds quickly and decisively when an infraction occurs, and the response to each infraction varies according to the circumstances of the infraction and its impact on student well-being and safety. SYA understands that adolescents will at times make missteps, and SYA strives to provide a disciplinary environment that addresses the situation without being excessively punitive. When appropriate, SYA focuses on support, counseling and treatment; however, there are behaviors that are unacceptable in any situation and will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Rules**

#### **Infractions likely to result in dismissal**

SYA does not tolerate the following behaviors:

- Possession, purchase or distribution of illegal drugs. Intent to purchase or distribute illegal drugs
- Sale or distribution of prescription drugs or other legal but potentially dangerous substances
- Engaging in or attempting to engage in non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
- Rental or use of unauthorized private accommodation such as Airbnb
- Providing false information on independent travel forms

### **Other Major Infractions**

These infractions may result in possible disciplinary committee meetings and may incur a variety of responses, including dismissal, recommended counseling or treatment if deemed appropriate.

Rules in this category include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use of alcohol, inappropriate use of prescription drugs
- Use of cannabis
- Various forms of dishonesty, including plagiarism and theft
- Violence and/or threatening behavior involving any member of the SYA community whether in person or online
- Violation of SYA's anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy
- Violation of SYA's internet and electronic communications policy
- Leaving the host city unaccompanied by the host family without prior permission
- Spending a night anywhere other than in the host family's home without proper permission from the school administration
- Providing false information about current whereabouts
- Failure to respect curfew hours established by each SYA campus -- returning after curfew in the evening or leaving before curfew ends in the morning
- Failure to call for help or assist another member of the SYA community when in an unsafe situation
- Non-disclosure of prescription psychotropic or controlled medications
- Violation of local laws or standards
- Dangerous, offensive, disruptive, aggressive, disrespectful or inconsiderate behavior unacceptable to SYA or the host families
- Driving an automobile or motorized cycle of any sort. Riding on a motorized cycle. Riding in an automobile except with host families or SYA faculty or with special permission from parents, host parents and the Resident Director

### **Possession, purchase, distribution or use of illegal drugs**

All possession, purchase, distribution or use of illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia is against school rules. SYA's response to this behavior distinguishes between possession, purchase, distribution or use as well as the type of drug involved. In Europe, use of cannabis by adolescents is at or slightly below usage in the U.S.; however, it is used much more publicly. Use by SYA students is not tolerated; possession, purchase and distribution of cannabis will likely result in dismissal from SYA. Any involvement (including use) with any other illegal drug is not culturally tolerated in any way and will likely result in dismissal from SYA.

### **Sale, distribution or misuse of prescription drugs or other legal but potentially dangerous substances.**

SYA's response to the sale or distribution of prescription drugs or other dangerous substances is likely dismissal. Misuse of one's own prescription medication is also against school rules; however, the response will be based on the specific circumstances and may involve non-disciplinary action if deemed appropriate.

## **Sexual Assault**

Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced or coerced into sexual activity without giving consent. “Sexual activity” is defined as contact with the sexual parts of the body: breasts, buttocks, and genitals. Consent means that all individuals involved in a sexual encounter agree to it, as expressed by words or gestures, and that any person may decide at any time that they no longer wish to consent and that they want to stop the activity. Consenting to one behavior does not obligate a person to consent to any other behaviors. Consenting on one occasion does not obligate a person to consent on any other occasion. Consent may be withdrawn at any time during an encounter. Because SYA is based in Massachusetts, the school follows this state law regarding consent, regardless of where a student is living in an SYA program:

- By law in Massachusetts, there can be no consent to sexual intercourse, oral sex, or any penetrative act if the individual is under age 16.
- This law applies regardless of whether the individual under 16 looked older or lied about their age.
- There can be no consent if a person is impaired by drugs or alcohol, a person is asleep or a threat, coercion or force is used during the encounter.
- It is illegal for individuals, regardless of age, to engage in sexual intercourse, oral sex, or any penetrative act with an individual under 16. This means there is no exception to the law in Massachusetts for individuals close in age. In other words, the provision often referred to as “Romeo and Juliet exception” for individuals close in age, does not apply in Massachusetts.

## **Alcohol consumption and inappropriate use**

SYA students are prohibited from drinking, regardless of age. If students are caught drinking it is reported to parents and will likely result in a discipline committee meeting, which means it will also be reported to sending schools. The only exceptions are if host parents offer students a small amount of alcohol or if students are allowed to sample wine when supervised by SYA faculty/staff.

## **Smoking and tobacco products**

For the purpose of this policy, “smoking” also includes the use of electronic smoking devices which create aerosol or vapor. “Tobacco product” means any product containing, made or derived from tobacco or nicotine that is intended for human consumption, whether smoked, vaped, heated, chewed, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, snorted or ingested by other means.

SYA believes that smoking is one of the worst habits that students can adopt while abroad. That being said, attitudes about smoking, even involving adolescents, are much more relaxed in the countries where SYA operates. It is not illegal for adolescents to smoke in any of SYA’s host countries. However, it is illegal to sell tobacco to adolescents; and this is the law which SYA expects students to abide by. Parents also have the right to tell their child not to smoke. Finally, SYA expects students to follow the following guidelines:

- No smoking on school grounds or near school grounds or any building used for school activities
- No smoking in or near the host family home
- No smoking on school trips or when representing the school in another setting



## **Disciplinary Procedures**

The great majority of discipline issues that take place at SYA do not involve violation of major rules and are addressed informally between students and the school administration. Parents are informed of this type of situation, but an official report is not sent to the sending school. The SYA President and/or Resident Director oversee SYA's formal disciplinary procedures. They have the discretion to respond to incidents of misconduct or infractions of SYA rules.

In the case of violation of a major school rule, the Resident Director and/or other faculty members speak to each student involved. Parents are contacted and informed of the situation. The student may be asked to write a statement describing the events in question before parents are contacted. Refusal to make a written statement is itself considered a major infraction. In the event that the school has information that a major school rule has been broken, the Resident Director or school administration may recommend a meeting of the disciplinary committee or forgo this in favor of a different disciplinary or non-disciplinary response. This decision is made solely by the SYA President and is not subject to appeal.

In the event that a discipline meeting is called, the committee, composed of faculty members and administrators, meets with the student to discuss the statement and clarify the facts of the situation. Members of the committee then deliberate in the absence of the student and make a recommendation for action to the SYA President. If for any reason the student is not able to meet with the disciplinary committee, the committee may meet without the student. Parents/their representatives do not participate in any way in the process or deliberation by the school. The committee's recommendation is then given to the SYA President. The response may include modification to student independence, placing the student on disciplinary probation, suspension, or dismissal. Disciplinary committee outcomes will be communicated to the student and the student's parents, host parents and sending school by the Resident Director. The decision is final. As a matter of SYA practices and policies, we do not share the underlying materials we collect throughout the process of an investigation.

For any disciplinary incident occurring immediately before a school vacation or holiday, the Resident Director, at their discretion, if approved by the SYA President, may require students involved in the incident to remain on site until such time as any required disciplinary proceedings are completed, regardless of student travel plans.

## **Search**

To address any safety or security concerns, SYA has the right to perform unannounced searches of students' property at the school, school-related events and the host family home. Further, SYA has the right to search student rooms at the host family residence and at hotels during school travel. Searches may be performed without notice, without consent and without a search warrant.

Regarding searches of belongings, a student's personal effects (e.g., backpack, purse) may be searched by a staff member to determine whether the student is in possession of contraband. The student's parents will be notified of the search as soon as reasonably possible. Refusal to submit to a personal belongings search may result in disciplinary action.

### **Status Review**

On occasion, the Resident Director may determine that a student may not be able to succeed in SYA's personally demanding and academically rigorous program. Contributing factors may include ongoing adjustment issues, attendance problems, lack of academic progress, inability to take care of oneself appropriately or adequately, disciplinary concerns, and attitudinal or other behavioral issues as determined by the Resident Director and faculty.

In such cases, the Resident Director will meet with the student and their advisor and at least some of their faculty members. They may meet as part of a regularly-scheduled faculty meeting or separately. For documentation reasons, the Resident Director will ensure that notes are taken.

The purpose of the meeting will be to proactively recognize an emerging issue or issues for the student in order to address them in ways that are in the best interest of the student, the student's parents and host families, and the SYA community, as determined by SYA. Action steps to be taken subsequent to reporting the meeting(s) may include: meeting with the student and/or the host family; phone conversations with parents and/or the student's sending school; referral to counseling, which may be required if available; referral to the DC if appropriate; behavioral contracts which can include early curfew, loss of independent travel privileges, etc.; and return to student's home country for a medical and/or psychological assessment.

### **Immediate Removal**

In any situation involving an immediate threat to personal safety of any member of the SYA community or property, the SYA President may order the immediate removal of a student. Depending upon the facts of the situation, the removal may be permanent or may be continued until such time as an appropriate fact-finding proceeding or hearing procedure or both can be arranged.

### **Departure**

It is SYA's policy that students who withdraw or are required to leave the program (whether suspended or expelled) return to their home country as soon as possible. The students are not permitted to remain with their host family, and their parent(s) is responsible for all travel expenses that result from the early departure.

### **Reporting of Disciplinary Infractions**

- Sending Schools: SYA keeps students' sending schools apprised of disciplinary infractions as deemed necessary and appropriate by SYA. Further, in the case of a student incurring a disciplinary infraction considered serious by SYA, and in all cases where a student appears before the Discipline Committee (DC), SYA will provide the sending school with a formal letter outlining the case and if applicable, the outcomes of the DC meeting.
- Colleges and Universities: SYA answers all questions from colleges and universities fully and honestly. In the case of a student returning to their sending school, it is the sending school college advisor who decides, according to sending school policies, when a disciplinary incident needs to be reported to colleges and universities, in the absence of a question

requesting such information. In the case of a student not returning to their sending school and relying on the SYA College Counseling Liaison to serve the function as primary counselor, or requesting an SYA diploma, SYA policy is to report disciplinary infractions that have resulted in probation or requirement to withdraw.

- Transcript: If a student is dismissed from SYA, the transcript will indicate that the student was “required to withdraw” and the specific date. The transcript does not provide any further detail regarding the circumstances of dismissal.

*As a reminder, both students and parents will be asked to sign off  
acknowledging they have read and will comply with this Student-Parent Handbook.*

# SYA Sanctuary Policy

## **Bystanders**

Students who have knowledge of or are witness to serious misconduct where student health and safety is particularly at risk (including use of illegal drugs or sexual assault) are expected to report such misconduct to school administration. Failure to do so will most likely result in disciplinary action.

## **Duty to Act**

SYA expects students to stay safe and help keep others safe; however, if they do find themselves in unsafe or dangerous situations, they are expected to call for help for themselves or a peer in need. Students involved in rule breaking who call for help are covered by SYA's Sanctuary Policy and will not face disciplinary action.

## **Sanctuary Policy**

Sanctuary is a non-disciplinary response to situations in which student health or safety is compromised. SYA recognizes that students sometimes make unhealthy decisions and put their safety and well-being at risk. Understanding that there is a reluctance to ask for help if disciplinary action could follow, the Sanctuary Policy allows a student to reach out proactively without invoking a disciplinary response.

This policy applies in instances of alcohol or drug use or overdose, danger due to physical or psychological distress, or presence in an unsafe situation or environment and is designed to promote greater safety for SYA students while abroad. If Sanctuary is granted, neither the student/s receiving Sanctuary nor the student/s requesting assistance on behalf of another student will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of SYA's drug, alcohol or whereabouts policies.

## Use of Sanctuary

When a student is facing or is in a potentially unsafe situation, or witnesses or has knowledge of another student or students in a similar situation, students should contact any faculty or staff member and clearly express their intent to seek help through SYA's Sanctuary program. The student must do so before the faculty/staff member has reasonable suspicion or is in a position where the violation is likely to be discovered. If during a Sanctuary admission a student becomes disruptive or threatening, Sanctuary may be revoked for that student. Students who request Sanctuary for themselves or others are expected to be truthful about all aspects of the situation. Failure to do so will initiate a disciplinary response, up to and including dismissal from School Year Abroad.

Once Sanctuary is in place, the Resident Director and the SYA President will determine an appropriate response designed to address the ongoing needs of the student.

## Results of using Sanctuary

When a student asks for and is granted Sanctuary, a non-disciplinary response means that a student does not sit for a formal disciplinary committee meeting as would likely be the case for the rule-

breaking involved. It also means that the student's school is not informed of their Sanctuary status. It does not, however, exclude students from actions taken by the school to promote the continued health and safety of the student, including but not limited to curfew and travel restrictions, modification of student privileges, recommended counseling, temporary return to the U.S. or in some cases recommended withdrawal from the program. All decisions made regarding responses to Sanctuary cases are final.

In cases involving drugs and alcohol, the student may also be required to undergo a drug and alcohol evaluation by an outside substance abuse professional (at their parents' expense), and may be subject to random, confidential drug testing (again, at their parent's expense). Failure to complete the requirements for evaluation and treatment after Sanctuary has been granted may lead to disciplinary consequences, including dismissal from SYA. Before a student is permitted to resume school activities (academic or extracurricular) following the use of Sanctuary, permission must be granted by the SYA President.

Parents are informed of Sanctuary requests and appropriate SYA-affiliated professionals will be brought in as well, as deemed necessary by the SYA President, in order to support the student. SYA will not report Sanctuary cases to sending schools or to colleges.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SYA Internet and Electronic Communications Usage Policy**

The purpose of internet service at all SYA campuses is to provide educational opportunities for research and study and to give students reasonable means to stay in contact with family and friends. The internet provided on campus, email and slack communications are the property of SYA and SYA reserves the right to monitor its use and access its messages and files.

SYA discourages excessive use of social networks and prohibits:

- Any use of computers for illegal purposes or in support of illegal activities, including illegal music downloads.
- Any use for political or commercial purposes.
- Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of SYA.
- Any use that is offensive or inconsiderate to SYA, students or faculty, host families or the host community.
- Copying academic papers from the internet, using AI tools to complete assigned academic work, or other plagiarism.
- Illegal copying of commercial software.
- Downloading, sending, creating or viewing inappropriate material, including but not limited to pornography, profanity, abusive language or statements, sexually explicit language or images, defamatory material of any kind, or threatening or harassing materials of any kind.
- Altering electronic communications to hide the user's identity or impersonate another person.
- Invading the privacy of others.
- Downloading programs or documents onto hard drives without prior consent of the Resident Director.
- Downloading any non-school related materials as this interferes with necessary school functions on the school network.
- Any attempt to penetrate computer or network security of SYA, or to gain unauthorized access (or attempted access) to any other person or entity's computer, electronic accounts or equipment.
- Using SYA's electronic systems for unauthorized monitoring, logging, propagating viruses or transmitting spyware/malware.

Any infractions of the above are considered grounds for confiscating personal electronic devices and/or disciplinary action.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SYA Social Media Comments and Participation Policy**

Comments to SYA-sponsored sites, such as blogs, online forms, etc., or social media sites, are welcome and encouraged; however, to promote respectful discussion within this forum, SYA requires users to be courteous and productive and avoid comments that are profane, obscene, offensive, sexually explicit, inappropriate, inflammatory or otherwise objectionable. Blogs often foster debate of an issue; users are to engage in such exchanges with mutual respect for others' opinions.

For the privacy of users and their families, please assume that all postings to SYA-sponsored sites will be publicly available on the internet and therefore publicly accessible without limitation or protection of any kind. Please consider how much personal information to share, with the understanding that this information may be linked to the user's name and published on the internet.

By posting a comment, video or any other material to SYA-sponsored sites as outlined above, users give SYA the irrevocable right and license to exercise all copyright, publicity, and moral rights with respect to any content provided, which includes using submissions for any purpose in any form and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing, distributing, creating other works from, and publishing. SYA reserves the right to review all comments, videos and any other material before they are posted, and to edit them to preserve readability and to ensure that they are appropriate for other users.

SYA further reserves the right to reject or remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to belief that the comments violate this policy, and to determine in its sole discretion which submissions meet its qualifications for posting. Any submissions that fail to follow this policy in any way or are otherwise irrelevant will be removed.

SYA also reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time to address issues that may arise and changes in SYA operations or the law.

In posting material on SYA-sponsored sites, users agree not to:

- Post material that SYA determines is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous or hostile towards any individual or entity.
- Post phone numbers, email addresses or other confidential information of students, faculty or any other person other than oneself. If users choose to post their own contact information for any reason, they should be aware that the information will be available to the public and is, therefore, subject to misuse.
- Post material that infringes on the rights of SYA or any individual or entity, including privacy, intellectual property or publication rights.
- Post material that promotes or advertises a commercial product or solicits business or membership or financial or other support in any business, group or organization except

those that are officially sponsored by SYA, except in designated areas specifically marked for this purpose.

- Post chain letters, post the same comment multiple times, or otherwise distribute “spam” via the SYA-sponsored site.
- Allow any other individual or entity to use their identification for posting or viewing comments.
- Post comments under multiple names or through use of another’s name.

SYA reserves the right to enforce any or all of the following:

- Ban future posts from people who repeatedly violate this policy. SYA may affect such bans by refusing posts from specific email addresses or IP addresses, or through other means as necessary.
- Remove or edit comments at any time, whether or not they violate this policy.
- Enforce disciplinary measures should students violate any part of this policy.

The user agrees to indemnify and hold harmless SYA, its affiliates, directors, employees, successors and assigns against any damages, losses, liabilities, judgments, causes of action, costs or expenses (including reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs) arising out of any claim by a third party relating to any material a user has posted on SYA-sponsored sites.

By posting a comment or material of any kind on an SYA-sponsored site, the user hereby agrees to the policy set forth above.

#### Creating and maintaining official SYA social networking sites

All “official” SYA social networking sites should adhere to the following standard. Sites that accept comments or postings by anyone other than the site administrator must be diligently monitored to ensure that information displayed fits within SYA guidelines and is appropriate to the subject matter of the page.

#### Student use of social media

First and foremost, students are encouraged to always exercise the utmost caution when participating in any form of social media or online communications, both within the SYA community and beyond.

Students who participate in online interactions must remember that their posts reflect on the entire SYA community and, as such, are subject to the specific behavioral standards.

Students are expected to abide by the following:

Students may not use social media sites or messaging to publish disparaging or harassing remarks about SYA or SYA community members including but not limited to faculty, staff, other students and members of host families.



- Students who choose to post editorial content to websites or other forms of online media must ensure that their submission does not reflect poorly upon SYA.
- Students are reminded that the school name (School Year Abroad, SYA, SYA Italy, SYA Spain, SYA France) and the school logo are trademarked and protected. They may not be used without SYA's permission, in any likeness.
- It is highly recommended that students adjust their Facebook and other social media applications settings to the highest level of privacy to prevent public viewing of potentially hurtful and/or incriminatory remarks.
- Students are prohibited from being "friends" with or otherwise connected to any SYA faculty or staff on social media, unless for SYA or education-related purposes. Students are also discouraged from using any personal email accounts for communication with SYA faculty and staff. While students will not be disciplined for any such contact, they are strongly encouraged to report to their Residential Director any outreach they receive from SYA faculty or staff that is of a personal nature so that it may be addressed.
- When students write to faculty or staff, the preferred method is to use their SYA email or SYA slack which are the official vehicles of communication. Appropriate texting is also permitted when necessary.

Failure to abide by this policy, as with other SYA policies, may result in disciplinary action.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SYA Medication Management Policy**

#### **Prescription Medication**

School Year Abroad (SYA) requires that parents provide complete information on their child's medical history and allow access to all of the student's medical records. SYA also requires parents to notify the school of any changes in the student's medical file, including new diagnoses or prescription medicine, at any time from enrollment through completion of the school year. Parents must disclose all controlled substances prescribed to their children. Students found to be in possession of undisclosed prescription medication will be in violation of the school's discipline code. Medication prescribed to a student is for that individual only. Students found to be providing others with prescription medication will likely face dismissal from the program.

Please note SYA will not allow a student to start a new psychotropic or controlled medication while abroad. There are risks involved and SYA faculty and staff do not have the medical training to monitor possible side effects in starting these types of medications. A student who must start a new psychotropic or controlled medication or requires a significant change in dosage needs to request an official Medical Leave and return to their home country for at least 2-4 weeks depending on the type of medication, until their doctor is confident that the student can take the new medication safely.

If a child is prescribed medication, parents must provide SYA with the following:

- a. Name of the medication
- b. Dosage amount
- c. Reason for prescription
- d. Any other important information about side effects, storage temperature, etc.

In addition, the prescribing physician is asked in the Physician Examination form to indicate recommendations for medical follow-up, if any, while abroad, and must fill out the prescription medication section of the form that provides SYA with the following:

- a. Medication (including its generic name), the dosage amount and the indications.
- b. Potential substitutes that may be obtained abroad should the U.S. medication not be available and a substitute be required.

#### **Dispensing and Distribution**

Medications will be stored and distributed in the following manner, regardless of the student's age:

##### Controlled and Psychotropic Prescription Medications

Students taking daily doses of controlled or psychotropic medications will be allowed to keep with them a seven-day supply, distributed weekly. Vacation periods and extended travel may necessitate the distribution of more than a seven-day supply. The school administration will securely store and dispense the medication.

### “As Needed” Medications

Students will only be allowed to have one dose of a controlled or psychotropic medication prescribed “as needed.” The host family will also be provided one dose in case of urgent need. The remaining medication will be stored by the school administration. Students should ask the school administration for a replacement dose as needed.

### Non-Controlled, Non-Psychotropic Prescription Medications

Students will be allowed to keep and self-dispense non-controlled and non-psychotropic medications. Examples include topical creams, oral antibiotics, oral allergy medications, oral contraceptives, asthma inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors and insulin. All medication must be transported in its original packaging with the appropriate prescription label attached.

### **Discontinuation of Prescription Medication**

Parents must notify the appropriate Resident Director, in writing, immediately should the decision be made for a student to discontinue use of a controlled and/or psychotropic prescription medication. Depending on the specific medication and discontinuation plan, SYA may require the student to take a medical leave and return home for at least two weeks if a medical professional has advised on the need for the student to be monitored during or after discontinuing the medication. It is important to note that neither SYA faculty and staff nor host families are trained to provide adequate monitoring and evaluation of the withdrawal process from medication.

### **Failure to Comply**

Failure to comply with the policies and procedures outlined above is forbidden by the school rules presented in the Discipline Philosophy and Procedures. The sale, sharing or other distribution of prescription drugs, as well as accepting such drugs from others, is expressly forbidden. Students who misuse prescription drugs in any way are liable for dismissal from School Year Abroad (SYA).

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SYA Athletic Activities Permission & Guidelines**

School Year Abroad (SYA) students are allowed to ride bicycles, swim, and engage in other athletic activities only if their parents have signed and returned to SYA the *Athletic Activities Permissions & Release of Responsibility* document sent under separate cover.

**Bicycling:** Driving or riding two-wheeled vehicles (motorcycles, Vespa-style scooters, mopeds etc.) with a non-electric motor of any kind is not permitted under any circumstances, even as a passenger with a student's host family. Parents may permit students to ride low speed electric-assisted bicycles (top speed is less than 20 mph and don't require plates or a license) with a signed permission form. Students are not allowed to ride electric or motorized scooters at SYA, due to significant safety concerns.

SYA students who ride a regular or electric bicycle to school, as a sport or for recreational purposes in town or on excursions will find that cycling in Europe may be quite different from what they may be familiar with at home. Automobile traffic density and speed, narrow streets and tight margins on the roads can make riding a challenge. The rich tradition of cycling in all SYA countries means that motorists are usually aware of riders and responsible bicycle riding reduces risk. But even the most careful rider cannot eliminate the possibility of an accident or injury, nor is there any guarantee that every road will be free of hazards. In considering whether to permit your child to bicycle while abroad, you should consider your child's level of experience in bicycling.

In deciding whether or not to give your child permission to use a bicycle while at SYA, you will need to consider the question of helmets. There is no doubt that helmets make bicycling much safer. Some jurisdictions may even require the use of helmets or other safety equipment. SYA requires students and faculty to comply with local laws regarding the use of such safety equipment and strongly encourages the use of helmets even when not legally required. We expect that you will have discussed this important safety topic with your child and persuaded your daughter/son to wear a helmet whenever riding a bicycle. In European countries, use of helmets is an accepted practice. Your child will be able to purchase a helmet in every SYA country if they intend to use a bicycle; however, they may also choose to bring a helmet from home.

In all countries, with teenagers' sensitivity to looking out of place, we have found it impossible to ensure that SYA students use helmets when they ride their bikes even when we require them to do so. There is inherent risk to bicycling, in particular in or near motor vehicle traffic. The risk includes serious injury or death and is made worse by not wearing a helmet. SYA cannot enforce the use of helmets as we cannot be everywhere at once; therefore, we cannot accept responsibility for ensuring that your child wears a helmet.

**Swimming:** Opportunities for swimming (both indoors and outside) also occur during the year, either during SYA-sponsored trips and excursions, with host families, or on the students' own free time. During SYA-sponsored trips and excursions, students (with parental permission to swim)

may only swim during specified times and at specified places, as authorized by an SYA staff member when a lifeguard is present. At all times, whether under SYA's supervision or not, students swim AT THEIR OWN RISK, and the following two rules always apply: students must never swim alone and must never swim outdoors at night.

Other Athletic Activities: Engaging in strenuous, challenging, and competitive athletic activities is part of the culture in all SYA countries. Therefore, opportunities for students to engage in these athletic activities also occur during the year. These activities may include, but are not limited to, organized team sports of all kinds, as well as skiing, hiking, rafting, fencing, martial arts, boxing, etc. They may be sponsored or monitored by SYA staff, or the students (with parental permission) may be allowed to engage in these activities independently. At all times, whether under SYA's supervision or not, students engage in these activities AT THEIR OWN RISK and will be expected to follow the stated rules of the given venue regarding use of safety equipment and fair play. All of these activities are potentially dangerous and involve inherent risks of serious injury, death, and/or property damage.

Sanctions: Even if parental permission is given, SYA reserves the right to restrict and/or prohibit participation in any of the activities described above as a result of inappropriate or unsafe actions by any student, and to impose additional disciplinary action, as SYA deems appropriate and necessary in accordance with its discipline policy.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **SYA Independent Travel**

*A local or regional worsening of the pandemic may cause changes to academics, student life, travel, and extra-curricular opportunities during the academic year.*

#### STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT, ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ASSUMPTION OF RISKS AND RELEASE FROM LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION

*This represents the policies presented in the document by the same name, sent under separate cover, for parent and student signatures.*

Independent travel is the opportunity to travel outside the host city unaccompanied by host parents or SYA faculty. It can lead to a greater immersion in the host country culture, increased language proficiency and a furthering of the student's educational goals. It is an earned privilege, not a right. Students who are in good academic standing, working toward mastery of the host country's language, sufficiently connected with their host family and able to make healthy and appropriate decisions when engaged in independent activities may earn, over time, the privilege to travel independently.

Permission to travel independently requires the approval of the Resident Director, signed permission from parents or guardians and signed acknowledgement from the student of their plans and responsibilities. These forms and procedures must be repeated for each independent travel request. This document is not a permission form for independent travel, but rather a reference for parents and students regarding the risks and responsibilities involved with engaging in independent travel, as well as the allocation of those risks.

Parent and student acknowledge that they understand:

- SYA's independent travel policies and procedures and that they had the opportunity to ask questions and obtain additional information about independent travel at SYA.
- Students are required to follow all of the rules and requirements set forth in the independent travel documents and that their failure to do so may result in dismissal from SYA, requiring them to return home at the parent's expense.
- Participation in independent travel involves risks not necessarily found in study at SYA's sending schools, including risks involved in traveling in more remote areas of the country; political, legal, social and economic conditions; extended unsupervised free time; different social standards and mores; different standards of design, safety, and maintenance of buildings, public spaces, and conveyances; differences in the reliability of public transportation; local safety, medical, and weather conditions; unpredictable exposure to criminal or negligent acts of others; and other additional risks of which neither SYA, the Resident Director, the parent nor the student are aware.
- Permission for the student to participate is based upon parent's belief that they have the physical and mental ability, maturity and self-confidence to be able to travel independently and to make responsible and appropriate decisions about their behavior

and to respond appropriately to the unexpected challenges which they might encounter while traveling independently in the foreign country.

- The above-mentioned risks may increase significantly if the student or their travel companions engage in drinking, drug use or other risky behavior while on independent travel.
- SYA's expectation is that parents and students discuss these risks together.
- The dangers associated with such behavior and that such behavior will, even if no physical harm comes to the student, jeopardize their future participation in the SYA program as described above.
- Neither SYA nor the host family will be responsible for chaperoning the student when they are engaged in independent travel.
- Independent travel at SYA is voluntary, not required.
- The rules and regulations of SYA apply to students while engaged in independent travel just as they would if the students remained in the host city.
- Safe independent travel requires exercising good judgment and that the student is responsible for their own actions and behavior, including but not limited to complying with local law.

By signing that they have read and understood the above policy, parents hereby release, waive, discharge and agree to hold harmless SYA, its trustees, officers, agents, employees, representatives, and volunteers (referred to as the "Releasees") from any and all liability arising out of or in connection with students engaging in independent travel.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **SYA Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy**

#### The Importance of Healthy Relationships and Boundaries

SYA educates all community members about healthy relationships and boundaries and seeks to empower students, bystanders, and others with concerns about harassment or discrimination, including sexual harassment, to share those concerns with SYA so that it may address them.

SYA promotes freedom of expression; this freedom implies a responsibility to respect the rights of others. Conduct that diminishes, exploits or abuses another's position or personal worth is not acceptable, and harassment in any form is not tolerated.

SYA is committed to providing a supportive academic and host family environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, including sexual harassment. At SYA, respect for the rights of all, and for the differences among us, is essential. All SYA students, faculty, staff, volunteers and host families are informed of SYA's harassment and discrimination standards, as well as the steps involved in reporting, investigation and consequences.

#### Definition of Harassment and Discrimination

Harassment is defined as any written, verbal or physical conduct, including electronic forms of communication, which denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of the individual's race, color, gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, veteran status, or any other class protected by law. Harassment seriously interferes with SYA's goal of creating an atmosphere in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity and will not be tolerated.

#### Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwilling and unwanted sexual attention, regardless of gender, from anyone with whom a person may interact in the course of attending or working at an SYA program or being present at SYA-sponsored activities. Sexual harassment may involve physical contact, compromising images, written (including via electronic means) or oral communications that are not wanted by the person on the receiving end of the attention, whether or not the intent or consequence of the behavior is to make the offended person feel uncomfortable.

#### Identifying Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can take various forms. Not all forms of sexual harassment may be readily apparent to every member of the community. It may be direct and overt, or it may be subtle and ambiguous. It may be behavior that is repeated, or it may be behavior that occurs only once. It is not social or courting behavior when all involved in the encounter or communication do not want to participate in it.

Individuals might unintentionally act in a manner that others experience as sexually harassing. It is the responsibility of all members of the community to ensure that their words, actions, and



interactions with others always reflect the intent to promote respect and trust. Attempts to justify such behavior as a “prank” or “joke” do not change its harassing nature if the object of the joke is not a willing participant. Whatever the basis for the harassment, it is prohibited.

SYA recognizes that sexuality is a normal part of human nature, and its discovery is a normal part of adolescence. Physical contact between students that is intended and perceived by those involved as positive, healthy, and appropriate to their age and experience is likely to occur. However, any level of sexual intimacy can bring with it physical, psychological, and emotional challenges that can be overwhelming to students. As such, SYA, as well as many health professionals, believes that sexual intimacy is not appropriate until students have reached a level of maturity that generally occurs after adolescence.

When trying to identify whether behavior is “harassing,” it is crucial to distinguish student-to-student interactions from sexual intimacy between students and adults, which is always prohibited. When these behaviors occur between an adult and a student, it is irrelevant whether the behavior is welcome or unwelcome. There is no circumstance in which these behaviors between adults and students are permissible.

The following behaviors are examples of sexual harassment. The list is suggestive rather than exhaustive, and members of the community should seek advice and assistance in any circumstance in which they are made to feel uncomfortable by the behaviors of another. It is also important to understand that behavior that was once enjoyed by someone may not always be tolerated, so it is imperative to understand how conduct is being perceived.

Some examples of behavior that may constitute sexual harassment (to reiterate, whether or not the intent or consequence of the behavior is to make the offended person feel uncomfortable):

- body language like staring and/or leering at a person’s body, or standing or brushing too close;
- unwanted sexual comments, abuse, jokes, insults, delivered orally, in writing, or electronically;
- derogatory or pornographic posters, cartoons, or drawings;
- pressure for sexual activity (including threats, but also repeated requests after earlier rejections);
- offering favors or benefits for engaging in sexual acts or threatening mistreatment if one does not engage;
- inquiries into one’s sexual experiences or activities or discussion of one’s own sexual experiences or activities;
- taking pictures, audiotaping or videotaping others in sexual or other potentially embarrassing circumstances and/or forwarding or threatening to forward the taped material to others
- the open display of sexually offensive objects, pictures, and messages
- physical advances that are unwelcome: kissing, hugging, pinching, grabbing, groping, or “playful” slapping; and/or
- physical assault, including rape or any coerced or non-consensual sexual relations.

### Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is an extreme version of sexual harassment. To reiterate the definition as it appears in the Discipline section of the handbook, sexual assault occurs when a person is forced or coerced into sexual activity without giving consent. “Sexual activity” is defined as contact with the sexual parts of the body: breasts, buttocks, and genitals. Consent means that all individuals involved in a sexual encounter agree to it, as expressed by words or gestures, and that any person may decide at any time that they no longer wish to consent and that they want to stop the activity. Consenting to one behavior does not obligate a person to consent to any other behaviors. Consenting on one occasion does not obligate a person to consent on any other occasion. Consent may be withdrawn at any time during an encounter. Because SYA is based in Massachusetts, SYA follows this state law regarding consent, regardless of where a student is living in an SYA program:

- By law in Massachusetts, there can be no consent to sexual intercourse, oral sex, or any penetrative act if the individual is under age 16.
- This law applies regardless of whether the individual under 16 looked older or lied about their age.
- There can be no consent if a person is impaired by drugs or alcohol, a person is asleep or a threat, coercion or force is used during the encounter.
- It is illegal for individuals, regardless of age, to engage in sexual intercourse, oral sex, or any penetrative act with an individual under 16. This means there is no exception to the law in Massachusetts for individuals close in age. In other words, the provision often referred to as “Romeo and Juliet exception” for individuals close in age, does not apply in Massachusetts.

### Reporting

SYA encourages students to talk to a trusted adult about what happened – so they can get the support they may need, and so that SYA may respond appropriately. If a member of the SYA community experiences or witnesses harassment or discrimination, they are strongly encouraged to report it immediately to the Resident Director. If the Resident Director is unavailable or the person reporting believes it would be inappropriate to contact the Resident Director, they should immediately contact an advisor or other SYA employee with whom they feel comfortable. Students can raise good faith concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

SYA urges students and parents/guardians not to make anonymous reports. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously, and disciplinary action will generally not be taken against an individual solely on the basis of an anonymous report. SYA cannot promise absolute confidentiality to those reporting harassment of any kind, as there may be a need to share information during an investigation or otherwise; however, SYA will disclose such information with discretion, on a need-to-know basis.

For the purposes of this handbook, the following definitions apply:

Reporting party: person(s) who are the subject of a complaint or allegation

Responding party: person(s) against whom the complaint or allegation is made

### Investigation

Allegations of harassment will be promptly investigated and followed by an appropriate corrective action and/or disciplinary response as necessary. The investigation may involve interviews with those involved, and each may bring an SYA advisor or faculty member of their choosing to accompany them in the interview for support purposes. An investigation may also involve interviews with other students or those who may have relevant information about the concerns reported and a review of any relevant documents or communications (in electronic or other form). SYA, in its sole discretion, may also deem it appropriate to use external investigators to review a complaint. In certain circumstances, SYA may be obligated to report misconduct to external authorities, such as to law enforcement or the local child welfare agency. SYA cooperates with external agencies and may postpone its own investigation into misconduct as appropriate.

Students are expected to cooperate in investigations and be honest when doing so. Failure to cooperate with an investigation may itself be cause for disciplinary action. If a student refuses to participate or cooperate at any stage of an investigation for whatever reason including, but not limited to, pending criminal charges, SYA reserves the right to take action, including proceeding without a statement from the student, or to require the student to withdraw from the SYA program.

When an investigation is complete, the findings will be shared with both the reporting and responding students. SYA reserves the right to take whatever disciplinary actions deemed appropriate including but not limited to: warning, probation, weekend activity and independent travel restrictions, reflection assignment, suspension, or dismissal. A student may also be referred for a counseling assessment. Students are reminded that SYA will report any misconduct from the program to the student's sending school.

Should the responding party not be an SYA student or employee (for example, a member of a host family or a student not enrolled in an SYA program), SYA will communicate with the relevant family or institution and offer supportive measures to the reporting party, but it may be limited in the ability to conduct a full investigation if the responding party does not cooperate.

### Retaliation

Retaliation against any individual who reports harassment and/or discrimination or who cooperates in an investigation of harassment and/or discrimination will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports misconduct. Retaliation may include behaviors such as being ostracized, having rumors or misinformation spread about the reporter. Anyone who retaliates against a student who reports harassment or other serious misconduct is also in violation of SYA policy. A student may violate this anti-retaliation provision regardless of whether the original complaint turns out to be true or the retaliation was not intended to be harmful ("it was just a joke"). Each retaliatory offense will be investigated and sanctioned separately. Individuals who themselves are not complainants, but who participate in an investigation, for example, as witnesses, will also be protected from retaliation under this policy.