

**Valley Christian Schools**  
**Policies for International Student Admittance**  
**Updated 11/8/2023**

WELCOME TO VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS! We are so happy to have you join our community!

This handbook is a mix of rules, policies, and advice. Overall, we encourage you to remember that you are coming to study in the US to learn, to experience a different culture, and to grow as a person. Be open to the experience and embrace the new adventures that await you in your time at Valley Christian Schools. Much of what is written here outside of the school policies to help you adjust well and fully take part in the American culture.

Your HomeStay parents here are acting as proxy parents while you are here. They work with the international coordinator and administration, but they are doing the bulk of the support to you while you are here logistically, emotionally, academically, and spiritually. You will live in their home, be with their family, eat their food, care for you, give you appropriate boundaries, go to church with them, and more. We encourage good communication between your family and them to fully support your stay in their home.

Mrs. Payton, the coordinator working with international students, is at the school as a resource for you. She supports your time here by working with your HomeStay family for any needs, runs the Summer International Orientation, makes sure you have all you need (uniforms, books, school supplies) for school, checks in on you regularly, is a listening ear for problems you may have, and plans activities for all international students throughout the year.

### **THIS HANDBOOK**

All parents, students, and HomeStay families should familiarize themselves of Valley Christian Schools' policies. By signing the enrollment documents, families and students are agreeing to follow all policies created by the Administrative Staff of Valley Christian Schools outlined in this handbook as well as their VCS Campus Student Handbook and any amendments or modifications made by VCS. If needed, you must have the documents translated.

### **TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES AND VALLEY CHRISTIAN**

1. Prior to receiving an I-20 form, students must make a full tuition payment, refundable only if the visa is denied. It will be refunded upon Valley Christian's receipt of the original denial letter from the U.S. Embassy stating the reason for the denial. International Student tuition and fees are otherwise non-refundable regardless of attendance. The unused HomeStay fees, Student Account, and Health Insurance will be refunded.
2. The student and his/her parents must communicate with the International Student Program Coordinator (ISPC) prior to the student's departure from the home country. Students may not legally arrive in the USA prior to 30 before the first day of school. New students must arrive at Los Angeles Airport by August 1, 2023.
3. VCS reserves the right to terminate a student's participation in the International Student Program if his or her conduct is considered detrimental or incompatible with the interests of

VCS. In this case, all fees paid will be non-refundable and the student's I-20 will be canceled.

4. The student must obey the laws of the United States and the states where they live and visit. A student found guilty of violating the law will be returned home at his family's own expense as soon as the student is released by authorities. Students must be escorted home by a parent, agent, or legal guardian.
5. The student is to return home within 5 days of the last day of school. They may not return home before the last day of school. HomeStays will not provide housing during summer break. HomeStays are not required to keep your room for you during the summer months. Students need to pack all their belongings they are leaving for the summer and make storage plans.
6. If a student wants to stay for the summer break, you need to make arrangements directly with your HomeStay. Your school year HomeStay is not required to allow you to live with them during the summer.
7. In the month of May, the I-20 will be extended for another academic year provided: the student has done well academically, a HomeStay family is available for the student for the following year, and full tuition for the following year has been received by the Business Office. All decisions and payments for the following year must be in place by April 15 or your spot at VCS can be given to a new student on our waiting list.

## **SCHOOL POLICIES**

1. VCS is an English-speaking campus and does not have an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Students must demonstrate an intermediate ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English to be successful.
2. A diploma and graduation are not guaranteed for any student. Students should consult his or her guidance counselor about the requirements for graduation. See also the VCHS Grade Transfer Policy regarding transcripts.
3. Parents, students, and/or agents must communicate directly with the International Student Program Coordinator (ISPC) for ALL official business regarding their student.
4. Students and families agree to support the Valley Christian Schools staff in its goals, procedures, and discipline policies and understand that Valley Christian Schools is a private institution and reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of any student who does not abide by VCS standards and requirements.
5. International Student tuition is non-refundable. If a student does not attend when the visa is approved or leaves once the school year begins, there will be no refund of tuition. A refund of HomeStay fees, student account, and remaining health insurance policy will be refunded.
6. All 7th - 12th grade students are required to purchase an iPad from VCS only. Details about the iPad Learning Program are posted on the Valley Christian Schools website at [www.vcschools.org/ipads](http://www.vcschools.org/ipads). It is to your benefit to keep your iPads in English to support your learning in English.
7. Students are encouraged to make an effort to get involved in VCS by attending and participating in school activities, sports, and/or clubs. This will help you assimilate into campus life, build friendships, and increase your feelings of belonging at the school.
8. The student's acceptance into Valley Christian High School does not guarantee athletic

eligibility. An eligibility ruling is made for each individual case by the CIF.

9. The student will attend school regularly and will be enrolled as a full-time student. The student must make a concerted effort to make satisfactory academic progress. If a student is achieving below a 3.0 average and/or a D or F grade on a progress report, the HomeStay and/or ISPC may require additional study hours, tutor, and limit co-curricular and weekend activities until the grade is improved.
10. International Students who fall below a 3.0 GPA for 1 semester will be put on Academic Probation. If the GPA is not raised to 3.0 the following semester, the student may be dismissed from VCS.
11. Students are expected to attend school every day. At 11 absences in any class, the student may be dropped from class, which can affect their F-1 visa status, and could be dismissed from VCS.
12. International Students that travel home during the school year (Christmas, Easter, or other reasons) may not take additional school days. Any school days missed before or after breaks (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break) will be unexcused unless cleared before you leave. Teachers are not required to let you make up work that you miss during unexcused absences. These absences are counted in the 11 allowed per semester.
13. Students are expected to cooperate fully with dress and grooming standards, the Christian standards of the school. This includes refraining from the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and narcotics (unless prescribed by a physician) **at all times including non-school hours**. The student is not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs. Smoking and the use of any tobacco products is forbidden. The drinking of any alcoholic beverage is expressly forbidden. US law strictly forbids the consumption of alcohol for everyone under the age of 21. **Violations of these standards shall constitute grounds for immediate dismissal from Valley Christian Schools.**
14. All students will dress in the contracted school uniforms during the regular school day which begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 2:45 p.m. Information will be provided to you upon acceptance to VCS and is found in your campus handbook.
15. Students consent and authorize VCS to use the student's name, photograph, film or video likeness, or any comments or statements of the student in materials, publications, or on websites to promote the school. No personal information will be publicized.
16. New Valley Christian School students, 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades, must attend International Student Orientation. This orientation begins on August 3, 2023. More information on the orientation will be sent after acceptance.

## **ACADEMICS - THE AMERICAN ACADEMIC SYSTEM**

Your experience in a classroom in America may be very different from the learning environment in your home country. Despite the differences, your teachers will be caring and willing to help you, so be sure to take advantage of the opportunities you have with tutoring, study groups, and meeting with your teachers. There are two significant differences between the American educational system and many others. First, American teachers value critical thinking. It will not be enough for you to memorize the professor's lecture and then repeat it on the test. Your coursework will guide you to understand the issues, engage the concept, and apply your knowledge to other situations. This may be a significant difference for you, but with time you will find that you can begin to adjust to this new paradigm for

learning.

Second, discussion and argumentation are very important elements of the educational system in America. You may find that your classmates readily disagree with your teacher's opinions at times. While it is always important to be polite and respectful, your teacher will likely encourage discussion and debate. The manner in which you express your viewpoint is important, however. Show respect by acknowledging the teacher's or classmates' point of view and then offer your opinion. Say, "In my opinion ... " or "I think ... " or "I feel ... " or "I believe ... " This discussion is an important opportunity for you to continue learning and thinking through new information.

Do not be afraid to speak up in class and voice your opinion. Your teacher will also expect you to be able to formulate an argument in your essays that you support with facts and examples. It is also important to remember that Americans are very concerned about time and that being late is seen as a sign of rudeness, especially consistently arriving late for class. Anytime you are late, you will be marked tardy. Too many tardies will result in discipline.

### **Tips for Academic Adjustment and Success**

- Teachers prefer it if students discuss ideas rather than just sit and listen.
- If you do not understand, ask. If you are not yet used to asking questions in class, speak to your teacher after class or after school.
- At the start of each semester, you will be handed a syllabus for each course. This is an outline of the course objectives, due dates for assignments, and more. Keep the syllabus for the duration of the course and refer to it if you are not sure about assignment requirements. Pay close attention when the teacher discusses the syllabus, as he/she will often explain during this time how grades will be determined.
- Do not try to write down everything in class.

### **What does it mean that Valley Christian is a Christian school?**

For a full description of what Valley Christian believes, please see our Doctrinal Statement available on our website. Simply put, we are a Christian School dedicated to a biblical worldview, excellent education and partnership with families.

Our foundation in the Reformed Tradition informs us that we don't avoid the world, we see it as it is; created by God. We know we are to understand it and work toward the redemption of all things through Jesus Christ. Our view of the world is based in what we know about the eternal God through His Word.

Reformed education doesn't "integrate" God's Word *into* curriculum, but considers God's truth to be *integral* to all we study and experience. Conversations about God aren't sequestered to a Bible class. They're part of all we do as we go. Based on this, a VCS student will dive into conversations about mathematical formulas and human anatomy and see God's intricate order in all things. We pick up instruments to play or put fingers to clay experiencing creative community with God. We look deeply into history and literature to see God's distinct hand and His story.

The beauty of Reformed education especially relative to public education, is that Reformed schooling provides great freedom to explore all of God's creation with great depth and without compartmentalizing faith in the process. It is a truly whole approach to learning.

Here are a few examples of how our Biblical worldview is practiced in the education we provide:

- Students are required to take Bible classes each year
- Teachers integrate their faith and Biblical perspectives in every subject matter
- Teachers will pray in class and may sometimes pray individually with students when requested. Athletic coaches may do the same.
- Students, faculty, and staff come together each Wednesday morning to worship together and to reflect as a Christian community on contemporary issues. These worship times include singing, prayer and reflections on Scripture. Chapel participation is required for all students and faculty.
- Students will receive a Bible when they arrive here. They will be required to read it for class assignments and be encouraged to read it for personal study
- Students can elect to participate in Bible studies, worship nights, and other faith-related activities.

### **Academic and Guidance Counselor**

Your academic and guidance counselor will help you plan and schedule your courses at VCS as well as the ISPD. In addition to helping you register for classes, your counselor is there to talk with you about your interests, goals, and sense of calling. When you have questions about scheduling, you should talk with your counselor.

### **The VCS Library**

The library has books, computers, and study areas available for you in your academic work. Additionally, the library is a comfortable place to be with a great atmosphere. The librarians are always happy to answer your questions. Check your campus for the hours the library is open. See your campus Student Handbook for additional rules and guidelines for using the libraries.

### **Student ID Cards**

All students must get a free Student Identification (ID) card. These photo ID cards serve multiple purposes:

1. It serves as proof that you are a VCS student.
2. It gives you access to all home sporting games for free.
3. It can get you access to the public library in Cerritos.
4. Show it at movie theaters or other places to obtain student discounts.

### **Adding, Dropping or Withdrawing Classes**

You cannot add or drop classes without notifying your counselor to make sure that you can make the changes and still be legal and/or on track. Consult the VCS Academic calendar for the last day to add or drop classes. Withdrawing from classes, and adding or dropping classes, need to be done by notifying your counselor to make sure that you can make the changes.

## Academic Integrity

- Cheating in any form is not tolerated.
- The use of AI is strictly prohibited.
- VCS students are expected to do their own independent work and refrain from plagiarizing the work of others.
- Our teachers know and understand that English is not your first language, so they will be gracious and accommodating...but turning in work that is not your own will result in disciplinary action.
- Teachers are much more interested in what YOU have to say, even if it isn't grammatically perfect or using the right word.
- When drawing from various resources for research purposes students must provide citations and bibliographic information. (If you do not know how to correctly cite sources, speak to your English teacher for help.) It can sometimes be appealing to fabricate findings or sources, however, this is not allowed.
- Students may not use an editor for any work turned in under their own name unless approved in advance in writing by the instructor, and only to the extent approved.
- During assessments (quizzes, tests, final exams) be sure to only use pencil and plain paper or a printed answer sheet (Scantron). No books, notes, translators, phones, electronic organizers or other electronic gadgets are allowed during an exam except if the instructor has indicated differently.
- Papers must be created by you except if you work in a group.
- Do not hand in the same paper twice.

**Students who engage in academic dishonesty may automatically receive an F on their assignment and may be in jeopardy of further disciplines. Dishonesty is reported to the principal.**

## Campus Policies / Student Standards of Conduct

For a complete list of Student Standards of Conduct, refer to your campus Student Handbook. •

Because the safety and well-being of the community may be at risk, students who break the law, either on or off campus, will be subject to investigation and disciplinary action.

- Students who possess, distribute, and/or use alcohol, narcotics, or other intoxicants on school premises or at VCS-sponsored activities will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Students on campus while under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol are subject to judicial action even if their consumption was off campus.
- In the interest of common health concerns, the campus provides a tobacco-free environment. Use of any form of tobacco on school premises or on the property of your HomeStay is strictly prohibited.
- All gambling on the VCS property is strictly prohibited.
- Slander and profane language, physical or violent verbal abuse of any person on VCS property or at functions sponsored by VCS will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. •

Harassment or intimidation of another student, faculty, or HomeStay family member or the threat of physical or emotional harm will not be tolerated.

- Lewd, indecent, or obscene conduct on VCS property or HomeStay will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. This includes possession or display of pornographic material in any form.
- Theft, damage, or vandalism of VCS, public or private property will result in disciplinary action.
- Unauthorized entry and misuse of VCS facilities or property, including the unauthorized use of computers, telephones, or other VCS equipment will result in disciplinary action.
- Possession of any type of firearm, including BB or pellet guns, paint guns, any copy of a gun or any counterfeit firearm, switchblades, bows and arrows, explosive devices, martial arts weapons, fireworks, and/or other weapons considered illegal or dangerous on VCS or HomeStay property will result in disciplinary action.
- The illegal use or possession of, or tampering with safety equipment such as fire alarms, smoke detectors, etc. on university premises is illegal and will result in disciplinary action.
- Software piracy is a theft and VCS does not condone or tolerate the unauthorized copying of licensed computer software. The unauthorized duplication or other software piracy is a violation of federal law and may expose the individual and the VCS to legal processes.
- **Monitoring Policy:** Authorized staff may audit individual Internet user access and have access to all network activity, including what files a user downloaded, what information and graphics were viewed during a network session, what messages were sent, and what sites a user visited. Therefore, all users must be aware that they should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of the VC network. If you unintentionally access an inappropriate website, report it to your teacher immediately so that school officials can block access to the site.
- **Suspension:** A student may be suspended from school for up to five days for serious violations of the rules and policies of VCHS. A student who commits a violation of California Education Code 49000 is subject to **immediate suspension and placement on Tier 3 of the discipline system.**

**The following are some examples of immediate suspensions:**

- Fighting
- Possession of or the use of tobacco, in any form, on campus or at a school sponsored event
- Gambling
- Vandalism or willful destruction of property
- The possession of pornography or the acquisition of such using the school computer network
- Harassment of any type (including by phone, mail, or e-mail)
- Hazing, physical abuse, or endangering the safety of others
- Disrupting school activities or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of school personnel
- Behavior which brings discredit to Valley Christian

### **Misconceptions**

Some common misconceptions (things that are not true) include:

- Misconception #1: **In the U.S. everyone is glamorous and rich - just like in the Hollywood movies.** Truth: You will probably be living an ordinary life with a family that is neither rich nor

poor. They probably, for example, won't have a maid to look after your needs.

- Misconception #2: **American families are all white and headed by a mother and father.** Truth: America is quite multicultural (from many ethnic backgrounds), and the nature of families is varied.
- Misconception #3: **Your host family will dote on you, with the mother devoting much of her day to making your life easier.** Truth: Family members will cherish their time with you, but they have their own lives to lead.
- Misconception #4: **Your host family house will be like a hotel.** Truth: You may have your own room, but most likely you will be sharing all of the other facilities.
- Misconception #5: **Meals will be like in a restaurant; you will have a large breakfast with convenient choices, several options for lunch, and a full-course dinner with soup and dessert.** Truth: Meals tend to be hurried and informal.
- Misconception #6: **You will be the only international student in the household.** Truth: Sometimes more than one student will be living with your host family. In some cases, they will be from another country. That can be an advantage since it gives you somebody to share your experiences with.
- Misconception #7: **You will be able to speak English like a native after a short time in your host family.** Truth: English is a very complex language and speaking it well takes considerable time. However, you will improve your English dramatically by staying with an English-speaking family.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU ARE ACCEPTED?**

1. An acceptance letter and Enrollment Information will be emailed to the student or agent.
2. After the Enrollment Forms are received back along with the tuition deposit payment, the I-20 will be express mailed to the address provided by the student. The student presents the I-20 to his/her local U.S. Embassy for permission to attend VCS on an F-1 visa. If the visa is denied, all but the \$500.00 application fee will be refunded upon Valley Christian's receipt of the original denial letter from the U.S. Embassy stating the reason for denial, and the return of the original I-20.
3. HomeStay Family information will be provided to the student approximately 1 month before arrival. If the student has their own HomeStay family, they must be approved and a home visit made before I-20 is issued.
4. All new International Students are required to attend the Summer International Orientation beginning on August 4, 2022. The cost of this program is included in your billed charges.
5. Along with the assistance of the ISPC, a schedule of classes will be prepared for the student based on their interests. A math placement test will be given to all new students during the International Student Orientation.
6. All International Students start each year with a Student Activity Fund of \$1,500 for the school year, which is included in the fees paid. This can be used to purchase uniforms, schoolbooks, field trips, or other items for school.
7. All new International Students will be issued an iPad and insurance included in the price of the first year's tuition.

8. Returning students should arrive in the Cerritos area no later than 3 days before the start of classes.
9. For any student using a 3rd party agent, VCS will recognize them as your agent as long as you attend VCS or your agent lets us know otherwise.

## **IMMIGRATION AND VISA INFORMATION**

### **General Information**

When you come to Valley Christian Schools (VCS) to study, you are responsible for following the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services rules and regulations during your time in the United States. You can access this information at [www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov). Because these laws are complicated and ever-changing, it's important for you to educate yourself about the basics of immigration.

**Passport:** In order to travel to the United States you must have a valid passport from your home country. You must make sure that your passport is always valid at least 6 months ahead of time.

**U.S. Visa:** You must also apply for a visa to allow you to enter the United States. You will be applying for the F-1 Student Visa. You should visit a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country or surrounding area in order to acquire this visa. You will have to schedule a visa interview where you will need to present the following materials:

- Your Immigration I-20 A-B form
- Your passport
- Notice of Action I-797C (receipt from SEVIS fee)
- Documents proving financial support
- Materials proving ties to your home country (indicating that you intend to return after your study at VCS)

### **SEVIS Immigration I-20 A-B Form**

The I-20 process begins after you are accepted to VCS. Angela Garris will send you the Immigration I-20 A-B form by FedEx.

**It is very important for you to keep this form safe!** After you receive the form, you should apply for the SEVIS 1-901 fee that is necessary for your visa to the States. You can pay this fee online and you will receive both an electronic receipt and a hard copy of the receipt in the mail (this is called a Notice of Action I-797C).

When you have both your I-20 A-B form and Notice of Action receipt, you may schedule a visa interview with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. After you have received your F-1 student visa, you should keep your I-20 safe with your other documents. It is essential that you have this when you enter the United States because you will need to present this document to the U.S. Immigration Officer. Your I-20 will be stamped when you enter the country.

Your I-20 form must be signed yearly to confirm that you are maintaining your F-1 status by studying

full-time at VCS. If you intend to leave the United States at any time during your time at VCS (breaks, summer, other trips), you MUST check your Immigration I-20 A-B form to see if the last signature is still valid within the 12-month time frame. If it needs to be signed, you MUST bring the Immigration I-20 A-B form to the ISPC at least 10 days before you leave so that it can be signed.

### **I-94 Card**

The I-94 is a white arrival/departure card that is completed as you enter the U.S. This card records your date of entry, indicates what kind of visa you have, and shows when you must leave the United States.

### **Maintaining Your F-1 Status**

Keep your passport valid at all times Attend VCS full-time during fall and spring semesters Do not work without proper authorization. Adhere to all federal laws regarding international student immigration requirements

### **ARRIVAL TO VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

When you buy your ticket, you should plan to fly to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The LAX airport is about a 30-minute drive from VCS. Your new HomeStay family will pick you up at LAX. Your HomeStay will vary depending on distance. Please contact Angela Garris if you have questions concerning flights or arrival. Students may not arrive in the USA prior to 30 before the first day of school. Students arriving more than 5 days before that first day of school may incur additional housing fees at \$50 per day.

### **What to Bring**

Since you will likely be bringing all of your belongings in only a few suitcases, you will need to make decisions about what to bring from home and what to buy when you get to California. You will be able to find any items you need as personal hygiene items and materials for your schoolwork with your HomeStay family as Cerritos has many shopping places.

#### **Here are some items you may want to pack:**

- Passport, I-20, and other important immigration documents
- Bank or ATM card
- Glasses or contacts if you need them
- Umbrella
- Computer, if you have one
- Musical instrument, if you play one (this can be rented nearby)
- Photos of friends and family
- If you bring small electrical items from your own country, you should bring an adapter plug. U.S. electrical current is 110-115, 60-cycle AC
- Personal hygiene products
- Casual clothing for summer and winter

#### **Your HomeStay family will provide these items:**

- A bedroom with a closing door and at least 1 window. Your bedroom will not be in an open area such as a family room or furnished basement.

- Bed
- Sheets, blankets, and pillows for the bed
- Bath towels
- Desk, chair, and lamp
- Closet and additional dresser if necessary
- Basic toiletries such as laundry detergent, toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, etc.

## **YOU AND YOUR HOMESTAY**

1. Students living with a VCS-appointed and approved HomeStay will be accepted in grades 7th-12th.
2. Students may live with biological parents who carry valid business visas or green cards and will be accepted in all grades. Any exception to this policy is at the discretion of the HomeStay Program Coordinator and school administration.
3. HomeStay Families must meet VCS standards of current admission policy by demonstrating a committed relationship to Jesus Christ and membership in a Bible-believing church. Students are encouraged to attend church with their HomeStay family.
4. All HomeStays are to complete a VCS application and background checks on all members of the family living in the home over the age of 18. (Required by the US State Department/ Department of Justice)
5. VCS will provide a HomeStay within 10 miles of the VCS campus, if possible. We will try to find homes that are closer when possible.
6. The HomeStay family assignment is for one academic year. No new placements will be made during the year except for extreme emergencies. If both parties agree, students can stay with the family for more than one year. VCS does not guarantee family marital status (married or single parent) or ethnic background for any student requests. Some students will be the only international student in a HomeStay while others will have a roommate.
7. HomeStay placements and addresses are registered with the Department of Homeland Security for purposes of tracking International Students. Students are not allowed to move without notifying and permission from the ISPC.
8. The student will become an integral part of the HomeStay family, assuming duties and responsibilities considered customary for a child of his or her age in the host family household. This may include cooking, doing dishes, helping with laundry, and cleaning the home. As a part of their family, HomeStays will not ask for more money from the student for additional food costs (unless for a special diet or request), transportation, family outings, or anything that they would not charge their own children.
9. Prior to leaving the home country for Valley Christian Schools, the student's parents should discuss the importance of good behavior with their student and ensure that he or she understands the significance of acting in a manner that will reflect well on his or her family and country.
10. By enrolling in VCS, you are agreeing to be responsible for any loss or damage to VCS school property or at the HomeStay house that your student may cause.
11. Problems that arise in the HomeStay are to be resolved first through discussion with the

HomeStay family, then with the assistance of the ISPC or their VCS counselor. The student and/ or HomeStay family is not to discuss problems of a personal nature with members of the community. If the student is experiencing any sort of relational stress or difficulty, or experiences abuse or harassment of any kind, he or she will immediately disclose the incident to the ISPC or their counselor.

12. A personal cell phone by a US cell provider must be provided to each International Student by his or her parents. The HomeStay will assist in getting one if needed. The student will provide the ISPC and everyone in their HomeStay family with their cell phone number.
13. Students may bring their own computer. The HomeStay family residence will provide Internet access, this is not required to be wifi or available in bedrooms. The HomeStay will have access to any information on the student's computer, iPad, and/or cell at all times and may install internet filtering software on the computer. HomeStay parents and VCS will have access to all passwords on all electronics. The HomeStay may limit Internet and cell phone usage to certain hours of the day if they feel it is interfering with academic progress or with face-to-face social connections. Inappropriate use of the Internet by the student, including viewing pornography or visiting questionable websites, is not acceptable. Such activity may result in program termination.
14. VCS recommends that all HomeStay families monitor electronic devices. If they are used in the bedroom, then the door should remain open. All electronic devices should be stored overnight outside of the bedroom in a specified place.
15. The student is forbidden from participating in any dangerous sports or activities such as hang gliding, bungee jumping, and skydiving. The student's family will accept full responsibility for any situation arising from the student's involvement in a forbidden activity.
16. Room and board are included in the amount invoiced to students. The student may wish to purchase items such as clothing, room decorations, entertainment, tutors, and music lessons. He or she may also wish to attend dances, extra-curricular events, and the senior trip. These expenses can be paid for by the student's account they have with VCS (if they have enough funds available) or additional funds sent to the student during the school year by his or her parents.
17. The student may not operate a motorized vehicle including the HomeStay family's vehicle or any friend's vehicle. Nor will the student get his/her California driver's license or permit before turning 18. Students at VCS may not drive on solely an International Drivers License.
18. Students under the age of 18, are not to take public transportation unaccompanied by a guardian (the guardian is your HomeStay family or another approved adult) or use ride-share programs for those 18 or older. HomeStay families are responsible for coordinating transportation. Public city buses can be taken with HomeStay approval for short distances.
19. **The only ride-share permitted is a TEEN ACCOUNT ON UBER** (please see the details of this program at <https://www.uber.com/us/en/ride/teens/>). To use this service, the homestay family and student work must work together to enroll them in an Uber Teen account, a program specifically designed for teens 13-17 with extra safety precautions such as specially screened drivers and tracking, and attach a debit or credit card of the student's to use for payment.

20. You must be at least 18 years of age to obtain any other rideshare app-based account. Account registration requires you to submit certain personal information, such as your name, address, mobile phone number, and age, as well as at least one valid payment method. You agree to maintain accurate, complete, and up-to-date information in your account. Your failure to maintain accurate, complete, and up-to-date account information, including having an invalid or expired payment method on file, may result in your inability to access or use the Services. You are responsible for all activity that occurs under your account, and you agree to maintain the security and secrecy of your account username and password at all times. The service is not available for persons under the age of 18. You may not authorize third parties to use your account, and you may not allow persons under the age of 18 to receive transportation using your account. You may not assign or otherwise transfer your account to any other person or entity.
21. Bus fees may be covered by the International Student fees if that was agreed on with the family before they came to stay with you. Valley Christian buses are for transportation to and from the HomeStay and school. The HomeStay parents are to coordinate transportation to all other school activities, tutors, study groups, etc. within reason at no *additional charge to the student*.
22. International Students may not ride in a car with another student who is not legal to transport passengers. This is any driver under 18 who has not had their license for more than 1 year.
23. The student is permitted to travel domestically with the HomeStay parents or with VCS-sponsored trips. Independent travel, aside from trips directly to and from the home country, is not allowed unless prior approval is granted from the ISPC in writing 48 hours before the trip. Students traveling without HomeStay parents must have a guardian over the age of 25 with them at all times. The cost of independent travel would be the student's responsibility.
24. Visits by the student's family or friends while in the program must be approved by the ISPC before they arrive or travel plans are made. HomeStay families will not be expected to house the student's guests at any time.
25. Students should travel home for Christmas Break for at least 10 consecutive days but no more than the given break allows. Students not returning home for Christmas Break:
  - a. Must get permission from HomeStay family to stay
  - b. Will be charged \$500 to be paid to the HomeStay family

### **HOMESTAY FAMILY GUIDELINES**

Welcome!! We are glad that God led you to Valley Christian Schools and to our VCS HomeStay family program this year. We look forward to getting to know you and helping you to have a successful year in your house and at Valley.

The previous HomeStay section covers rules for **all International Students at VCS**. Additionally, each HomeStay has house rules/guidelines that make the house happy, successful, and peaceful. These rules may be different for each HomeStay and also different from what you had before, so you should review them together. You may not like all of the rules, but they are still the rules. You have to live by

them while you are here. The rules for the International Student and HomeStay children should be similar to those of the same age. The rules may change or add rules during the year to help you grow in certain ways.

As you live together as a family, following God and learning about him together, we know you will have a great year. American families may not be what you have in your own family. Some of our HomeStays are single parents, some are older with no children, some have none or few children while some have many children, and some parents may be of different ethnic backgrounds. There is no typical HomeStay family. Don't feel like you need to compare yours to anyone else's.

**Here are important things to know about your American HomeStay families and the way we live:**

- American families like to be together and we welcome you to be part of our family from this day forward. That means loving each other, encouraging each other, and not speaking badly about people. If you are unhappy with anything or anyone, talk to your HomeStay parents about it quickly and it will lead to a good conclusion.
- You will be a part of a family, not a hotel. In the HomeStay program, you are expected to be part of the family. That means interacting with everyone, being helpful, and talking with us about how things are going with you.
- Being helpful can be fun, and each family will expect you to have some responsibilities in their house. There are all sorts of ways to help. Being helpful and putting others first is a value we have at Valley Christian Schools.

For example:

- a. volunteer to take people's plates after a meal or clean the counter of used plates, cups, and trash.
  - b. volunteer to help carry groceries from the car.
  - c. volunteer to help make breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
  - d. invite others to be first in whatever we do.
- Practicing being thankful and grateful is a life habit. Choosing to remain positive and finding the good in hard circumstances will change your life. Leaving your family and friends to come to a foreign country is a very brave, but hard, decision. Having a mindset that you are here to experience the adventure of a lifetime can help. If you find your attitude getting bad, think of what you have to be thankful for. Know that if you are having a hard time, you can talk to your HomeStay parents, school counselor, or Mrs. Payton—we are here to help!

Here are some ideas of things to be grateful for:

- a. Be thankful to have a great family at home AND a HomeStay family here in America who loves you!
- b. Be grateful for your friends, new and old...and those yet to come!
- c. Be grateful for Valley Christian Schools and the incredible opportunity you have to be here!
- d. Be grateful that God loves you and has a purpose for why you are here! And, His plans for you are GOOD—a future including a promising career, an awesome family, and

plenty of friends that this season of your life is part of!

“A wise man once said, ‘Hate has 4 letters, but so does LOVE. Enemies has 7 letters, but so does FRIENDS. Lying has 5 letters but so does TRUTH. Cry has 3 letters but so does JOY. Negativity has 10 letters, but so does POSITIVITY. Life is 2-sided—choose the better side of it.’”

“Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.” Philippians 4:8, The Message Version

## **GENERAL HOMESTAY GUIDELINES**

**BE ON TIME!!** Time orientation is one of the things that can vary in different cultures. In America, it is frowned upon to be late. Americans want to always be on time for their appointment, even 5 minutes early is considered to be respectful toward others. This may be very different than you are used to at home, but it is part of the culture you are now in.

**Schedules:** In a busy American family, it is important to plan ahead and let others know your appointments at least a couple of days ahead of time. As soon as you know of an appointment, meeting, or change in schedule, tell your HomeStay parent. They should be given at least a 2-day notice for any outing or change in normally scheduled activities. If there is not enough time to prepare, the answer may have to be "no". They will review the family calendar with everyone every week.

**Personal belongings:** Generally, all personal things should be kept in your room when not in use. This includes books, shoes, and so on. Please look around before you go to bed at night and put your personal belongings in your room or the appointed spot in the house.

**Keys:** Your HomeStay will provide you with a key to the house. Be responsible with your house keys. If you lose the key you may have to replace the lock.

**Noise:** All family members should be sensitive to the needs of others in the home. Most homes are usually quiet between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. on school nights. During these times someone may even be sleeping. This means all electronics should be shut off during quiet times. Weekends may have different quiet times. Please have a conversation with your host family about their expectations in this area.

**Kitchen:** You are welcome to use kitchen appliances like the toaster and microwave. Do not cook if you are alone in the house unless you are given permission to do so. Don't cook using the oven or stove without the help of your HomeStay parents. As with everything, if you take something out, put it away. Clean up after yourself. Throw away paper plates, plastic forks, spoons, knives, and cups. Rinse dirty dishes and place them in the sink or dishwasher as directed.

**Meals:** You are responsible for making your own breakfast each day and fixing/taking a bag lunch for school if you want one. You can also purchase your lunch using your own money at school if you would rather have a hot lunch. Most families try to eat dinner together as a family as much as possible. After each meal, everyone should clean up after themselves.

**Food:** Let your HomeStay know what you enjoy eating and they will try to incorporate some of your favorites in the menu, but in general they will be eating what they normally do. You are welcome to help yourself to anything in the fridge or pantry, but be responsible - don't ruin your appetite for regular meals or eat all of something that everybody wants. Also, don't waste food. Only take a small amount of food or drink, and then go back for more if you want.

**No food in the bedrooms:** Please eat in the kitchen and dining area only. If you have food you don't want others to eat, ask for a special box or shelf to keep it on.

**Privacy:** Bedrooms are private places for sleeping, resting, and enjoying quiet time. HomeStay children are not allowed into your bedroom, and you are not allowed to go in theirs. This gives everyone a private place they can go to.

VCS encourages the HomeStay to have an open-door policy on bedrooms. Especially if computers are allowed in the rooms, your door should remain open at all times except when sleeping. Spending too much time in your room is considered rude and a sign of unhappiness in American culture. Have a good balance between interacting and being alone.

#### **Bathroom:**

- Most homes in our area have only 1 or 2 bathrooms. Students will most likely need to share with others in the family. Because of this, everyone needs to clean up after themselves.
- A daily shower is common. Daily shaving is expected for men. Most women shave their legs and underarms in America. People use deodorant because the smell of body odor is not acceptable in American culture. They brush and floss their teeth every morning and evening and sometimes after every meal. Those with a tendency towards bad breath use mouthwash.
- Bathroom floors do not have drains. Keep the water in the sink and in the bathtub. Place the shower curtain inside the bathtub when showering. Dry off inside the tub before getting out.
- Generally, a shower should last no longer than 10 minutes. Late-night showers, although common in some other countries, should be avoided because it is considered impolite to awaken someone with noise from the running water. Be sure to shower before 10 p.m.
- In America, water from a bath is not shared between people. Empty the tub when finished.
- Remove all loose hair from the bottom of the sink or the tub before leaving the bathroom so as not to clog the drain. Put it in a wastebasket. Do not remove the drain stopper from the sink or tub.
- Every person in the family home shares in the duty of cleaning up. When you use the bathroom, make sure that you lean up after yourself. Wipe up water spills, hang towels, and wash out the sink and shower/tub.
- Clothing should not give off unpleasant smells. Change your clothes daily, especially when they may smell of perspiration. Wash the clothes you wear each week.
- In America, you use toilet tissue to cleanse after using the toilet. The tissue is thrown into the

toilet and flushed. Do not put used, soiled toilet tissue in the trash can. Flush it down the toilet. Body waste and toilet tissue are the only things that should be flushed down the toilet.

- Women use either tampons or sanitary napkins for menstruation. Wrap these in toilet tissue and then throw them away in a garbage can after use - do not flush them down the toilet as this will damage the plumbing and you may be held responsible for any repairs.
- Basic hygiene products will be provided by the HomeStay family. Special needs or wants will be your responsibility.
- Have your HomeStay family show you how to shut off the water to the toilet. If the toilet becomes clogged, this will prevent it from overflowing and will avoid a mess.

**Laundry:** Put dirty laundry in your provided hamper. You will probably be responsible for washing, hanging, and putting away your own folded, clean clothes. Bed sheets and pillowcases can be washed every other week or so. Do not use the washing machine or dryer by yourself until your HomeStay has given you permission. Be courteous to others in the house and move your laundry from washer to dryer and out of the dryer in a timely manner.

**Chores:** You may be assigned daily or weekly chores with HomeStay children- cleaning the kitchen, sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, dusting, taking out the trash, etc. This usually takes 5-20 minutes each day. Do your daily chores as all members of the family take part in chores.

**Bedroom cleanliness:** Make your bed daily and keep your room picked up. Part of your chores are emptying your trash, making sure everything is off the floor, dusting, and vacuuming your own bedroom. Discuss with your HomeStay what can be put on the bedroom walls and how to attach items when decorating your personal space.

**Friends:** Friends are welcome to visit. Talk to your HomeStay parents about it first. Be courteous and introduce your guests to anyone in the house, starting with the parents as Mr. and Mrs. Absolutely no overnight guests without prior permission. Students should ask for permission before going out or making plans with friends. Be sure detailed information is provided to your HomeStay as to where you are going, how you can be reached, phone numbers, and when you will be back.

**Speaking English:** One of the main benefits of attending Valley Christian is to learn and improve your English. We expect English to be spoken in your HomeStay at all times. You can speak another language when talking with your family or studying for a language class (like Spanish). It is seen as rude to speak another language around people who don't understand it. If you need to ask a question in your language, explain and ask permission first, then go ahead.

**Cell phones:** The student will need to purchase his or her own phone plan and not be added to the HomeStay's current family plan. This usually requires an unlocked phone to be purchased which is an additional cost. (For example, if a student wishes to purchase an iPhone, he/she will need to purchase an unlocked phone for approximately \$900 and pay a month-to-month fee)

**Telephone etiquette:** If you need to speak on the phone for more than a few minutes, go in the

backyard out front, or in another room so others don't have to listen to your conversation. Bringing your cell phone to the table while eating is not appropriate. You should leave it in your room until after the meal is over. This applies to eating out also. You should be able to enjoy the people in front of you for 15-30 minutes without the distraction of your phone.

**Church:** You are encouraged to attend weekly church services with your HomeStay family as part of your experience at Valley Christian. Make sure you know what time you will leave the house and how long you will stay. Be sure you are dressed appropriately and ready to go on time—ask your HomeStay family if you aren't sure what to wear. During church, your phone should be on silent and not be seen.

**Transportation:** VCS classes start at 8:15 a.m. every weekday. Be ready and dressed in uniform in plenty of time to get to school whether you ride the school bus, walk, or are driven by your HomeStay. Bus transportation is provided by VCS to school and home from school and the cost is included in the International Student Fees. Your HomeStay will familiarize you with the bus route. The VCS bus service is not a way to get elsewhere after school like the mall, library, friend's house, tutor, etc. This is for your HomeStay to provide transportation as part of their agreement. Be sure to have a list of emergency contact numbers in case you miss your bus. There is only one drop-off and one pick-up per day. If you miss your bus, you need to make other arrangements.

Be sure to let your HomeStay know ahead of time if you need a ride somewhere special. Be courteous and always on time for them to pick you up. Do not expect your HomeStay to always drive you. Try to get carpools from others if you are going out in a group. Don't rely on just one parent to always drive.

**Location/Safety:** Your HomeStay is expected by VCS to know where you are at all times. Your HomeStay family is encouraged to participate in school activities, especially the Back-to-School night in the fall, and watch sporting events or music concerts in place of your parents. Making contact with other International Students and their HomeStay families in your area is a great way to find carpools and friends for students. A roster of all HomeStay families and their contact information is available by request.

**Illness/Medicine:** It is essential to let your HomeStay know about any illness or physical symptoms. If you do not feel well during school hours, you may visit the campus office staff. If you are sick and miss school make sure your HomeStay calls the Attendance Hotline to let VCS you will not be at school.

- **High School Attendance Hotline (562) 865-0281 x400**
- **Middle School Attendance Hotline (562) 865-6519**

**Student Finances:** Each student will have their own spending money. VCS recommends that students arrive with a credit/debit card already set up with a corresponding bank from their home country. You should not share a bank account with anyone else. Students and HomeStay families should not borrow money from each other. Money misunderstandings can create distrust in student/family relationships. The student is responsible for all personal expenses including:

- Entertainment: Movies, sports events, and restaurants that they participate in without the HomeStay

- Travel and Excursions: Any cost associated with personal travel activities.
- Personal Items: shampoo, makeup, deodorant, etc.
- Clothing: All clothing including winter jackets, and school uniforms.
- All school expenses: Including books, class fees, sports and special events
- Cell Phones

### **HomeStay Family Roles**

Your HomeStay family will most likely be the first people you meet when they meet you at Los Angeles Airport (LAX) when you first arrive. They will also be responsible for getting you back to LAX at the end of the school year.

The following are the roles of your HomeStay, along with the rules and guidelines already listed.

- Go over the above rules and guidelines you provided in the International Student Handbook and the campus handbook.
- Monitor your grades and assignments on PowerSchool.
- Participate in school activities in place of the parents, especially the Back-to-School night in the fall as well as sports, dramas, or other school activities you are involved in.
- Stay in contact with the ISPC and HomeStay coordinator for all questions or concerns regarding your stay.
- Provide their address and contact information to the Department of Homeland Security for the purpose of tracking the student. Students are not allowed to move WITHOUT notifying the ISPC.
- Provide the student with a key to the house. Lost keys must be replaced and paid for by the student. This may include paying for changing locks.
- Make sure the student has a ride to and from school every day and that they are not late to school or allowed excessive absences.
- Encourage students to speak English and be a part of family activities.
- Ensure that the student is not required to babysit younger family members.
- Provide the student with a room with a closing door, a complete bed with linens, a desk, a chair, a window, and a closet.
- Provide Internet service.
- Provide 3 meals a day, seven days a week for the duration of the school year.
- Provide laundry facilities and supplies.
- Provide adequate heat, light, and ventilation.
- Provide transportation to appointments, school events, church, and other places within reason.
- Assist the students in setting up cell phone service when they arrive. HomeStay families do not co-sign or add students to their existing accounts.
- Attend church services with students every week. Allow students to see the family living out their faith. Help with Bible homework, answer questions, and openly discuss religious beliefs.
- No not allow any student to be left home alone overnight without an adult over the age of 25

supervising; as well as notifying ISPC when this occurs.

- Not charge the student for reasonable "extras" (food, transportation, family outings). HomeStay families are paid a stipend from VCS and this will cover all expenses.
- Notify the ISPC of any family changes including people moving in or out of the home.
- Allow the ISPC or any VCS administrator to inspect the HomeStay prior to placement and during the year for routine home visits, announced or unannounced.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

In the United States, the cost of healthcare is the responsibility of the individual and not the government. Health Care in the United States is among the best in the world, it is also very expensive. For this reason, all international students are required to have health insurance while attending Valley Christian Schools. There are many different types of health insurance policies available, the policies vary in cost as well as what they cover. VCS has contracted with an insurance provider to provide a cost-effective insurance plan that meets the needs of most international students. In an effort to protect you from plans that do not provide sufficient coverage, VCS will purchase the plan and make available the coverage when you arrive at school.

As important as it is to have health insurance in the United States, it is also important to realize that health insurance will not cover all of your medical expenses. Health insurance will make healthcare more affordable, but not free. Health insurance does not cover dental care, vision care, or the cost of immunizations. Be sure that you have money available for health needs that are not covered by insurance.

## **HOLIDAYS**

There are many holidays in the United States. Although banks and offices may be closed on certain public holidays, it does not mean that you do not have class on those days. If you're not sure if you have a class, consult the online calendar.

### **December 31/January 1: New Year's Eve/New Year's Day**

New Year's Eve is usually a special night of festivities. Many people attend parties. At midnight, it is customary to kiss or embrace friends. New Year's is often spent with family or friends.

### **Third Monday in January: Martin Luther King Junior's Birthday Day.**

Martin Luther King was a civil rights leader remembered for his dedication and work toward civil rights during the 1960s.

### **February 14: Valentine's Day**

It is customary on this day to send friends and "special friends" Valentine cards, candy, or flowers.

### **Second Monday in February: President's Day**

This day has been set aside to commemorate the birthdays of two important U.S. presidents: George Washington, who was the first president of the United States, and Abraham Lincoln, who was the 16th president and very popular for his leadership during the Civil War.

### **March 17: St. Patrick's Day**

Named for the patron saint of Ireland, this day is often celebrated with parades and parties. Many people

wear green clothing and put up decorations. If you do not wear green on this day, you may get pinched.

**Springtime (date varies): Easter Sunday**

This is a Christian holiday, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is customary for people to decorate Easter eggs.

**April 1: April Fools Day**

This day has no real meaning other than providing people with the opportunity to play jokes on each other.

**Second Sunday in May: Mother's Day**

Americans honor mothers on this day with greeting cards, flowers, and gifts.

**Last Monday in May: Memorial Day**

This was established to pay tribute to all members of the U.S. Military who died in the service of the USA.

**Third Sunday in June: Father's Day**

Fathers are honored on this day with greeting cards and gifts.

**July 4: Independence Day**

On this day in 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed. Many people and businesses fly the American flag on this day, which is celebrated with parades and fireworks.

**First Monday in September: Labor Day**

Labor Day was established to recognize people who work, and the importance of labor in our society. It is also seen as the end of summer.

**October 31: Halloween**

There are a number of theories on the origin of Halloween. People often celebrate this holiday by wearing costumes and carving faces into pumpkins. Children dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating.

**November 11: Veteran's Day**

This holiday honors American veterans of foreign wars.

**Fourth Thursday in November: Thanksgiving Day**

One of the most popular holidays of the year. It is a time to be thankful to God for all the good things in life. The holiday is based on a celebration that took place in 1621, where Pilgrims and Indians gave thanks for a good harvest. Thanksgiving dinner usually includes turkey, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

**December 24/December 25: Christmas Eve/Christmas Day**

Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on this day. People often decorate their houses and exchange gifts with family and friends.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Why am I considered an International Student?**

If at least one of these statements is true, you will be considered an International Student:

- If this is your first or second year studying in the United States
- If your TOEFL score is below 70.
- If you are a student whose primary address is currently outside the United States
- If you live with someone not your biological parent (Host, Homestay, guardian, etc)
- If you need a I-20 (**F-1** Student Visa)

All students must remain with an International Student status for a minimum of 2 years while at VCS. Any change in immigration status must be reported in writing to the International Student Program Coordinator by April 15 for consideration of a change in status.

### **How do I apply to be a student or to become a HomeStay family?**

Applications are available at our website at <http://www.vcschools.org/international> or from the International Student Program Office located in the High School office.

**When is my application due?** Completed applications, along with a \$500 USD application fee, need to be received no later than March 31 for the current school year. Applications received after this date will be placed in our Wait Pool and considered on a "best fit for space available" basis.

### **Does Valley Christian offer tuition assistance for international students?**

Valley Christian does not offer tuition assistance for international students nor does it offer merit scholarships.

### **Will Valley Christian provide a guardian or arrange for HomeStays for international students?**

Valley Christian does place the students with a HomeStay Family on a 10-month stay. Students may live with parents or immediate family members who are legally allowed to live in the USA. All other students must use the HomeStay placements made by VCS.

### **Who are the primary contacts for international admissions?**

#### **Amy Payton**

Student Program Coordinator  
17700 Dumont Ave., Cerritos, CA 90703  
562-865-0281 x228  
[apayton@vcschools.org](mailto:apayton@vcschools.org)

#### **Ana Menendez**

Tuition Specialist  
10818 Artesia Blvd. Cerritos, CA 90703  
562-860-0556 x244  
[amenendez@vcschools.org](mailto:amenendez@vcschools.org)