

HOMESTAY STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026 EDITION

WELCOME HOME

A practical guide to living successfully with a Columbia College host family in Metro Vancouver.

Creating a safe, respectful and supportive homestay experience.

Updated: September 2026

Welcome to the Homestay Program

Welcome to Columbia College and to your new home in Canada.

The Columbia College Homestay Program gives students the opportunity to live with a local host family while studying at the College. Homestay is intended to provide a safe and supportive living environment while helping students adjust to life in Canada, practise English, experience local culture and become part of the community.

Metro Vancouver is highly multicultural, and our host families reflect that diversity. Host families come from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Some were born in Canada and others have made Canada their home. Each household is different, but all approved hosts share a commitment to welcoming and supporting Columbia College students.

This handbook explains the responsibilities of students and host families, important program policies, fees, household expectations, and the support available throughout your stay. Please read it carefully and keep it for reference.

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

A successful homestay depends on respectful, open communication. Ask questions, discuss household routines early, and contact the Housing Department whenever you need support.

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1. Program Overview & Eligibility

Purpose of Homestay

Homestay is more than accommodation. Students join a household and are expected to participate respectfully in daily life while maintaining their independence as a student. Hosts provide accommodation, support and, depending on the selected plan, meals.

Placement

Homestay placements depend on host availability and are offered on a first-come, first-served basis. The College will make reasonable efforts to consider preferences identified in the Homestay Application; however, specific requests cannot be guaranteed.

Full required fees must be received before a placement can be finalized. Students are encouraged to apply and complete payment early rather than waiting for a study permit decision, as host availability may become limited.

Who may participate

- Registered Columbia College students who meet the requirements of the Homestay Program.
- University Transfer students age 17 or older: minimum initial stay of two months.
- High School students who are minors and require Columbia College-arranged custodianship: minimum initial stay of five months.
- Students with a private custodian may participate in homestay under the applicable non-custodial/adult fee structure.

IMPORTANT

Homestay is reserved for students who are registered and actively studying at Columbia College. Students who complete or discontinue their studies must make arrangements to leave the Homestay Program.

2. Homestay Options & 2026 Fees

Homestay fees are due on the first day of each month, regardless of the student's move-in date. Early arrival before the regular paid period is charged separately.

2026 Fee Schedule

Plan	Monthly Fee	Minimum Stay	Placement Fee	Airport Pickup
Adult – 3 Daily Meals	\$1,200	2 months	\$375	\$100
Minor/Custodianship – 3 Daily Meals	\$1,300	5 months	\$375	\$100

Dinner Only	\$1,100	Applicable program minimum	\$375	\$100
Room Only	\$900	Applicable program minimum	\$375	\$100

Additional program fees may apply:

- Custodianship set-up fee: \$325.
- Custodianship monitoring fee: \$50 per term.
- Private bathroom, when available: \$100 per month, paid directly to the host family.
- Early arrival: \$50 per night, paid for nights before the regular monthly homestay period.
- Homestay change/moving fee: \$200 when a student requests a change after the initial month, where applicable.
- Vegetarian Meals Request: \$100/month
- Halal Meals Request: \$200/month

NO UNAPPROVED CHARGES

Students should contact the Housing Department before paying a host family any fee that was not previously communicated or approved through the Homestay Program.

3. Custodianship

Students under the age of majority may require custodianship depending on their age, program of study and immigration requirements. Columbia College can arrange custodianship for eligible students who live in a Columbia College homestay.

Columbia College-arranged custodianship

- The student must remain in an approved Columbia College homestay while the College-arranged custodianship is in effect.
- The host family may assume day-to-day custodial responsibilities after the student moves in, in accordance with the College's custodianship process.
- Parents or legal guardians must communicate requests affecting the student's custodial arrangements through the Housing Department.
- Students may not leave College-arranged custodianship without an approved alternative custodial arrangement where one is required.

Private custodian

A student who wishes to leave homestay while custodianship is still required must arrange an eligible private custodian before moving. Under the program's current requirements, the private custodian must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, live in the Lower Mainland, be at least 25 years old, and be able to communicate fluently in English.

The approved private custodian becomes the College's primary custodial contact for the student.

IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

Custodianship requirements can depend on the student's circumstances. Students and families remain responsible for ensuring they meet current immigration and study permit requirements.

4. Payments, Cancellations & Refunds

Payments

For adult/non-custodial students, the College pays the host family for the first month using prepaid homestay funds. Beginning with the second month, the student normally pays the host family directly using the payment method agreed with the host. Prepaid funds held for the final month are applied when the student properly ends participation in the program, subject to any applicable charges.

For custodianship students, Columbia College administers prepaid homestay payments to the host family throughout the prepaid period. Students will receive information about renewal fees before the next academic term.

Cancellations and refunds

Refund eligibility depends on when the cancellation occurs and whether the student has already arrived or begun the placement. The \$375 placement fee is generally non-refundable once placement services have been provided.

After arrival, applicable non-refundable amounts may include the placement fee, the first month of homestay and, for custodianship students, the custodianship fee. Leaving before the required minimum stay may also result in additional non-refundable homestay charges.

Where a study permit or visa is refused, refund treatment may differ. Students must provide supporting documentation to the College so the applicable refund can be assessed.

BEFORE CANCELLING

Contact the Housing Department before making a final move-out or cancellation decision. The College will confirm the notice requirements, amounts already committed to the host, and any refund that may apply.

5. Your Homestay Accommodation

Students are provided with a furnished private bedroom and reasonable access to household facilities. Typical inclusions are bedding and linens, clothing storage, a desk or suitable study space, wireless internet, laundry facilities and a house key.

Bathroom

- Bathrooms are commonly shared with the host family or other students.
- Keep showers to approximately 10–15 minutes and avoid showering very late at night when it may disturb the household.
- Leave shared areas clean and dry, remove hair from drains, and store personal toiletries as directed by the host.
- Students are responsible for purchasing personal toiletries such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, deodorant and personal hygiene products.

Laundry

Laundry is generally completed once per week. The host will explain the household's laundry routine and how to use the washer and dryer. Laundry detergent is normally provided by the host.

Internet and utilities

Reasonable wireless internet use is included. Students must use the household internet responsibly and lawfully. Students should conserve electricity and heat by turning off lights, heaters, fans and electronics when not in use, and by following household instructions regarding windows and temperature.

ASK BEFORE USING

If you are unsure how to use an appliance, fixture or household system, ask your host before using it. This helps prevent damage and misunderstandings.

6. Meals & Kitchen Use

Meal arrangements depend on the homestay plan selected. Students should discuss food preferences, allergies and dietary requirements during the application process and again with the host after arrival.

Three-meal plan

Breakfast is often a simple, self-serve meal such as cereal, toast, fruit or yogurt. Lunch may be prepared by the student using food provided by the host or may consist of leftovers, sandwiches and other simple items. Dinner is normally prepared by the host.

Dinner Only and Room Only

Students on Dinner Only or Room Only plans may use approved small appliances such as a microwave, toaster and kettle and will have reasonable refrigerator storage. Use of the stove or oven is not included unless specifically permitted by the host.

Cooking rules for minors

Minor students are not permitted to use the stove or oven. They may use approved appliances such as a microwave or toaster in accordance with the host family's instructions.

- Tell your host in advance if you will not be home for a meal.
- Do not waste food and do not take household food that has not been offered or included in your plan.
- Clean the kitchen and dishes after use.
- Contact the Housing Department if meal arrangements are not consistent with your selected plan or if a significant dietary concern arises.

7. Household Guidelines

Every host family has its own routines and reasonable household expectations. Students are responsible for learning and respecting those expectations.

- Communicate respectfully and keep the host informed about your schedule when appropriate.
- Treat the host family, other residents, guests and pets with courtesy.
- Speak English in the presence of the host family whenever practical to support communication and language development.
- Lock exterior doors when leaving or returning home.
- Do not enter private bedrooms or use personal belongings without permission.
- Ask before inviting visitors to the home.
- Observe quiet hours from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. unless the household has agreed to another arrangement.
- Do not use candles, incense or unapproved heating/cooking appliances in the bedroom.
- Smoking, vaping, cannabis use and alcohol consumption are not permitted in or around the homestay property under the Homestay Program's household rules.

Personal property

Students are responsible for their own personal belongings. Keep valuables secure and do not leave important documents, cash or electronics unattended in shared areas.

Pets

Many Canadian households have pets. Students should identify allergies, fears or other important concerns in the Homestay Application so these can be considered during placement.

8. Privacy, Guests, Sleepovers & Curfew

Student privacy

A student's bedroom is their private living space within the host's home. Hosts and students should respect reasonable privacy and communicate clearly about access to the room.

Hosts should normally provide notice before entering a student's bedroom. Entry without prior notice should be limited to situations where there is a reasonable concern involving safety, an urgent household issue, necessary maintenance, or another circumstance requiring prompt access. Routine inspection of a student's personal belongings is not appropriate.

Students must also respect the host's property and may not install surveillance devices or cameras in the homestay without prior authorization and compliance with applicable privacy requirements.

Guests and sleepovers

Students must ask the host before inviting guests to the home. Overnight guests are not automatically permitted.

Custodianship students must obtain approval before staying overnight outside the homestay. Parents or guardians should provide written permission through the Housing Department rather than giving instructions directly to the host.

Curfew

Custodianship students are subject to the Homestay Program curfew and any reasonable household expectations communicated by the host. Repeated failure to follow curfew requirements may result in parent/guardian involvement and further action by the College.

9. Damages & Financial Responsibility

Students are expected to use the host family's property carefully and responsibly. Students may be financially responsible for damage caused by misuse, negligence or failure to follow household instructions.

Examples may include damage to bedding, furniture, appliances, plumbing, locks, flooring, walls, or damage resulting from fire, flooding or pest issues attributable to the student's actions.

1. Tell the host immediately when damage or an accident occurs.
2. Contact the Housing Department before making payment for damage.
3. The College may request photographs, receipts, repair estimates or other documentation.
4. The student and host should not independently agree to a substantial damage payment without involving the College.

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

Reporting an issue promptly helps prevent additional damage and allows the College to support a fair review of responsibility and costs.

10. Moving In, Travel & Absences

Before arrival

Contact your host family before finalizing travel arrangements so that arrival details can be coordinated. Share your flight information and expected arrival time with the Housing Department when requested.

Early arrival

Students arriving before the regular monthly homestay period are charged \$50 per night for the additional nights. The Housing Department will confirm how payment should be made.

Move-in after the month begins

When a room has been reserved for the student, the regular monthly fee remains payable even if the student moves in after the beginning of the month.

Travel during homestay

There is no reduction in the monthly homestay fee when a student travels or is temporarily away while keeping the room. The host continues to reserve the room and the student's belongings remain in place.

Belongings

Students must arrange to remove their belongings when leaving the program. Items left behind may be packed or stored by the host, and storage or disposal arrangements may result in additional costs.

11. Changing or Leaving Homestay

Students must provide at least 30 days' notice before leaving or changing homestay, unless the Housing Department determines that an urgent move is necessary because of a safety or serious program concern.

Students should contact the Housing Department before giving final notice directly to the host. The College will explain the move-out process and any required documentation.

If notice is not provided

Failure to provide the required notice may result in the student being responsible for the applicable homestay payment during the notice period.

Changing host families

Students may request a change for personal, practical or compatibility reasons. A \$200 moving fee may apply when a student requests a change after the initial month. Where the College determines that an emergency or serious homestay concern requires relocation, the College will work with the student to arrange an appropriate alternative.

A CHANGE IS NOT A FAILURE

Students and host families sometimes discover that a placement is not the right fit. Contact the Housing Department early so concerns can be discussed and options considered.

12. Transportation & Airport Arrival

Columbia College is located in Vancouver and most homestay students use public transit to travel to campus. Students should expect to use TransLink services and should obtain the appropriate Compass Card or transit product.

Airport pickup

Airport pickup can be arranged through the College for \$100. The designated transportation provider will meet the student and take them to the confirmed homestay or other approved destination.

Students are responsible for providing accurate flight details and notifying the Housing Department promptly if their itinerary changes.

Getting around Metro Vancouver

- Allow extra travel time during your first weeks while learning your route.
- Use official transit information to plan trips and check service changes.
- Keep your host family's address and phone number available when travelling.
- Minor students should follow all curfew and permission requirements when travelling independently.

13. Concerns, Conflict Resolution & Safety

Small misunderstandings are normal when people from different households and cultures live together. Students and hosts are encouraged to communicate respectfully and address minor concerns early.

If you have a concern

5. Speak with your host when you feel comfortable doing so and explain the concern clearly.
6. If the concern continues, or if you would prefer support, contact the Housing Department.
7. Provide relevant details so the College can understand what happened and speak with the appropriate people.
8. If the concern involves immediate safety, leave the unsafe situation if possible and contact emergency services or the College's emergency contact as appropriate.

Students may raise concerns confidentially with the Housing Department. The College may speak with the host, student, parent/guardian or custodian when necessary to assess the situation and determine appropriate next steps.

IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY

For police, fire or ambulance emergencies in Canada, call 911. For urgent homestay matters requiring the College's emergency contact, call 604-671-8525.

14. Student Support & Important Contacts

Students are encouraged to seek support early if they are feeling overwhelmed, lonely, unsafe, or uncertain about their living situation. Columbia College staff can help students identify appropriate academic, personal, health and community resources.

Housing Department

Contact	Felipe Ribeiro
Role	Careers & Housing Coordinator
Email	housing@columbiacollege.ca
Office / Emergency	604-683-8360 604-671-8525 (emergency only)

Additional support

- HealthLink BC: call 8-1-1 for non-emergency health information and advice in British Columbia.
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868.
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8.
- Emergency services: 9-1-1.

The College may also provide access to counselling, nursing and other student support services. Students should consult current Columbia College student-service information for the most up-to-date availability and access instructions.

KEEP THIS HANDBOOK

Policies, fees and services may be updated. When there is a difference between this handbook and a later written notice from Columbia College, the most recent written College communication will apply.

WELCOME TO YOUR COLUMBIA COLLEGE HOMESTAY

We hope your homestay becomes a positive and memorable part of your experience in Canada.

15. Mutual Responsibilities: Student, Host Family & College

A successful homestay is a shared responsibility. Students, host families and Columbia College each have a role in maintaining a safe, respectful and supportive living environment.

Student responsibilities

- Communicate respectfully with the host family and Housing Department and raise concerns as early as possible.
- Follow the Homestay Program policies and reasonable household expectations communicated by the host.
- Pay homestay fees and approved additional charges on time.
- Care for the host family's home, furnishings and property and report damage promptly.
- Respect the privacy, property and personal boundaries of all household members.
- Provide accurate information about allergies, dietary requirements, health or safety needs relevant to the placement, and other important accommodation considerations.

Host family responsibilities

- Provide a safe, clean, appropriately maintained and welcoming home environment.
- Provide a private, furnished bedroom suitable for sleeping and studying, together with the facilities and services included in the student's homestay plan.
- Respect the student's reasonable privacy, personal space and belongings.
- Provide meals consistent with the student's selected meal plan and communicate household food routines clearly.
- Communicate household expectations at the beginning of the placement and address concerns respectfully.
- Treat students respectfully and without discrimination.
- Contact the Housing Department regarding serious concerns, repeated policy issues, safety concerns, or proposed financial charges rather than imposing independent penalties.
- Inform the Housing Department of significant changes in the household that could materially affect the student's placement.

Columbia College responsibilities

- Coordinate placements and communicate Homestay Program expectations to students and hosts.
- Support students and host families when concerns or misunderstandings arise.
- Review serious complaints and determine appropriate next steps based on the circumstances and available information.
- Coordinate custodianship responsibilities where Columbia College-arranged custodianship applies.
- Arrange or support relocation when the College determines that a placement should not continue.
- Maintain program records and communicate applicable fees, notice requirements and administrative decisions.

SHARED STANDARD

Homestay is not simply a room rental. It is a structured accommodation program based on mutual respect, appropriate boundaries, communication and student support.



Columbia
College

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16. Privacy, Bedroom Access & Recording Devices

Bedroom privacy

A student's bedroom is the student's private living space within the host family's home. Students are expected to care for the room and respect the host's property, while hosts are expected to respect the student's reasonable privacy and personal belongings.

Hosts should normally provide reasonable notice before entering a student's bedroom. Notice may not be possible where prompt access is reasonably necessary because of an emergency, an immediate safety concern, suspected fire or flooding, urgent maintenance, significant risk of property damage, or another comparable situation.

Routine access for maintenance or a program-related room review should be communicated in advance whenever reasonably possible.

Personal belongings

Hosts should not search a student's luggage, drawers, bags, personal devices or other private belongings. If a host has a serious safety or program concern involving a student's belongings, the host should contact the Housing Department so that the concern can be addressed appropriately. Emergency circumstances may require different action.

Cameras, audio recording and surveillance

Students must not install or operate cameras, audio-recording devices or other surveillance equipment in the homestay without prior written authorization from the Housing Department and compliance with applicable privacy requirements. Students must not record private areas or household members in circumstances where they would reasonably expect privacy.

Host families must likewise respect the student's privacy and must not place surveillance equipment inside the student's bedroom or bathroom.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

If either a student or host believes their privacy has been violated, they should preserve relevant information and contact the Housing Department promptly rather than attempting to investigate the other party's personal belongings.

17. Complaints, Investigations & Emergency Relocation

Columbia College recognizes that homestay concerns range from minor misunderstandings to serious allegations involving safety, privacy, harassment, property or program compliance. The College will determine an appropriate response based on the nature and urgency of the concern.

General review process

- Report: the student or host contacts the Housing Department and provides relevant information.

- Initial assessment: the College considers urgency, safety and whether immediate action is required.
- Interim measures: temporary arrangements may be made while the concern is reviewed.
- Review: the College may speak separately with the student, host, parent/guardian, custodian or other relevant individuals and may request supporting documentation.
- Decision and follow-up: the College determines reasonable next steps and communicates them to the appropriate parties.

Temporary or permanent relocation while a concern is under review does not, by itself, mean that the College has concluded that either the student or host family violated Homestay Program expectations.

Where a student leaves because of an alleged serious breach involving safety, privacy or program expectations, standard notice, payment and refund provisions may be reviewed by the Housing Department based on the circumstances. Any exception is determined by the College and should not be assumed in advance.

URGENT SAFETY

If there is an immediate threat to personal safety, call 911 where appropriate. The student should move to a safe location and contact the Housing Department or College emergency contact as soon as reasonably possible.

18. Bedroom & Living Environment Standards

Homestay accommodation must provide an appropriate residential environment for the student. A bedroom may be located on a basement level provided it is an appropriate legal residential sleeping space and meets applicable safety requirements.

- The bedroom should be clean, furnished and suitable for sleeping and studying.
- The student must have reasonable privacy and appropriate storage for clothing and personal belongings.
- The room should have adequate heat and ventilation and appropriate access to natural light where required by applicable residential standards.
- The student must have reasonable access to a functioning bathroom, hot water, laundry and the household facilities included in the homestay arrangement.
- Hosts should advise the Housing Department of significant maintenance concerns that may materially affect the student's accommodation.

Temperature and air conditioning

Air conditioning is not a standard Homestay Program requirement. During periods of unusually hot or cold weather, hosts and students should take reasonable steps to maintain a safe and comfortable living environment and follow public health or emergency guidance where applicable.

Bathroom use

Households may establish reasonable bathroom routines, including expectations concerning shower duration, cleanliness and late-night use. Restrictions should be reasonable and should not prevent a student from maintaining normal personal hygiene.

19. Dietary Needs, Allergies & Food Preferences

Accurate dietary information is important for successful placement. Students and families should distinguish between medical needs, religious or ethical requirements, and personal food preferences.

Medical allergies

Food allergies and medically necessary dietary restrictions must be disclosed accurately during the application process. Students and parents/guardians are responsible for providing sufficient information about the nature and seriousness of an allergy so the College can assess placement considerations.

Religious or ethical dietary requirements

Requirements such as halal, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free or lactose-free diets should be described as specifically as possible. For example, a request for halal food should explain whether the student requires halal-certified meat, avoidance of pork only, separate preparation practices, or other specific arrangements.

Food preferences

Food dislikes and preferences will be considered where possible but cannot be guaranteed. Homestay provides an opportunity to experience household and Canadian food traditions, and students are encouraged to communicate respectfully about foods they do and do not eat.

TELL US BEFORE PLACEMENT

The College has a much better opportunity to find an appropriate match when allergies and dietary requirements are disclosed fully before a host is selected.

20. Changes to the Host Household

Host families must notify the Housing Department when a significant change occurs or is expected that could materially affect the student's placement.

- A new adult or long-term resident moving into the home.
- A significant change in household composition.
- A new pet where this may affect allergies, safety or the original placement request.
- Another student being added where bedroom, bathroom or household arrangements may be affected.
- Major renovations or construction affecting the student's living space.
- A planned extended absence of the host.
- A move to another residence.
- A material change to the student's bedroom, bathroom access, meal arrangement or other service included in the placement.

The Housing Department will determine whether updated information, screening, inspection or alternative arrangements are required.

21. Additional Services, Transportation & Direct Charges

Students should clearly understand which services are included in their homestay fees and which charges, if any, are additional.

Host families may not impose additional charges, financial penalties or fees for transportation, meals, facilities or other services unless the charge is an established Homestay Program fee or has been disclosed and approved in advance by the Housing Department.

Students should contact the Housing Department before paying a substantial or unexpected charge requested by a host.

Private arrangements

If a student and host wish to make an optional private arrangement outside the standard homestay services, they should first confirm with the Housing Department whether the arrangement is permitted and whether it affects the Homestay Program.

22. Authorized Contacts, Parents, Agents & Payers

Students may have several people involved in their education and accommodation, including parents, guardians, custodians, education agents, counsellors, sponsors or individuals paying fees. These roles are not interchangeable.

- Payment of a student's fees by another person does not automatically authorize that person to make decisions for the student or receive confidential student information.
- The College will communicate with authorized individuals in accordance with the student's age, custodial arrangements, consent and applicable College procedures.

- For custodianship students, requests affecting overnight stays, residence, travel or custodial arrangements must follow the communication process established by the Housing Department.
- Agents and counsellors may assist with communication but do not replace the legal authority of a parent, guardian or approved custodian unless formally authorized.

KEEP CONTACTS CURRENT

Students and families should promptly advise the College when an authorized contact, parent/guardian, custodian, telephone number or emergency contact changes.

23. Host Absence & Supervision

Minor students

A host family must notify the Housing Department in advance of a planned absence that would leave a minor student without the level of adult supervision required by the Homestay Program or custodianship arrangement. Appropriate alternative arrangements must be approved before the host leaves.

Adult students

Hosts should also advise adult students and the Housing Department of an extended absence when it may affect meals, access to the home, emergency support, household services or other parts of the agreed homestay arrangement.

Hosts should ensure students know whom to contact in an emergency and how essential household matters will be handled during the absence.

24. Homestay Handbook Acknowledgement

Students and host families are expected to review this handbook and understand the Homestay Program's key expectations. Acknowledgement confirms receipt and review of the handbook; it does not replace any separate agreement, College policy, custodianship document or applicable law.

Student Name	
Columbia College Student ID	
Student Signature	
Date	
Host Family Name	
Host Signature	
Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicable)	
Date	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing, the parties confirm that they have received or been given access to the 2026 Columbia College Homestay Student Handbook and understand that questions should be directed to the Housing Department.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE HOMESTAY PROGRAM

Safe accommodation • Clear expectations • Respectful communication • Student support