

STEP (Short Term Exchange Program) Guide for YEO/YECs

Following are tips to help District 6250 YEO and YECs as they support youth applying for the STEP program.

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Application Deadline: Feb 1 for the upcoming summer. No exceptions. Completed Student AND host family application must be submitted, and the application fee must be in Program Coordinator's hands by this date.

Acceptance of Applicants: Once the online student application AND host family application are verified and without issue, the applicant is accepted into the program and the match process is started.

Application Form: The STEP program using the YEAH online portal, similar to the Long-Term program. Off-line PDF files used prior to 2020 will not be accepted.

1. Preliminary Application: Applicant completes the online Preliminary Application which is reviewed to determine initial eligibility (age15-18, GPA≥2.5). This application is open from October – January on the district website <https://www.rotary6250.org/page/short-term-youth-exchange>.
2. Student's meeting eligibility are then shared the link to complete two online application forms:
 - a. Student STEP application
 - b. Host family application

Age Restrictions: Must be 15 by June 1 to participate; must be enrolled in H.S. (not graduated) on the Feb 1 deadline; students who turn 19 during the summer of the exchange can apply but may have limited options for countries which will accept them.

Background Check: The Host Family Application form is submitted as part of the application process. This is a requirement because the program is a Family-to-Family exchange: the outbound student will also be hosting his/her host family's son/daughter of the same age during the same summer. If college age students will be home for the summer their information must be included on this form.

Health Insurance: The largest component of the \$250 application fee goes to a comprehensive health and accident insurance policy for the applicant. Even if the applicant's parents have good insurance, this policy is purchased as it ensures all of our outbound students are covered at the same level regardless of any coverage changes that could happen if the parents employment changed. The policy covers 30 days of the applicant being outside the USA. If the applicant books flights which have her/him outside the USA for 31-60 days, they will be required to purchase an additional month of coverage (2016 rate was \$100/mo).

Divorced parents - issues to be aware of:

- Both parents are required to sign the application forms if they both are legal guardians of the applicant.
- The family can coordinate the time for the inbound student (host sister/brother) in whatever manner works best for the family. This may mean that the matched students spend all their time with one set of parents, or split the time in some manner across two households. All adults in the households where the inbound student will stay must complete the Host Family Application form.

YEO/YEC Responsibilities:

1. Verify completeness of the application before it is signed and sent to Program Coordinator
2. Interview the applicant to ensure adequate maturity and correct intent of participation. Although this is much shorter than the long-term program, a high level of maturity is still required for success. In recent years in our district we have had outbound students who were not well suited for the experience. If they decide to back out of the program after they are matched with a family, it becomes a difficult situation for everyone involved and very unfortunate for their host sister/brother who can experience a bad impression of Americans or be unable to participate in the program for the summer. For a list of screening questions Visit the student in his/her home with parents present. Check home for safe and welcoming environment for inbound host student. Take 4-6 photos of the home and include in the background check form submitted to Program Coordinator.
3. Witness the signing of the application by the applicant and parents, and sign the form as the sponsoring Rotary Club representative.
4. Call the two listed references and make notes on the host application form. Forward this page to Program Coordinator along with the photos.
5. If problems occur during the exchange, assist with mediation and problem solving. Inform Program Coordinator of the issues.
6. Club financial obligation: None!

Timeline:

December – Feb 1	Completed applications submitted to Program Coordinator. Applications are processed as soon as they arrive. Early submission encouraged, especially for Spain as this is the most popular destination
Feb – April	Matches are completed. Usually complete within 4-6 weeks of completed background check.
April	Mandatory ½ day orientation program. Conducted by Program Coordinator in Madison/Baraboo area. Held on a Sunday afternoon. Date is set by January 15 and posted on district web site www.rotary6250.org/STEP
June – August	Exchanges completed. For some exchanges with South America, the inbound student may have to come the following January (during their summer holiday).

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For the student:

1. Why did you apply to become a youth exchange student?
2. What is the most important responsibility when representing your community and country while abroad?
3. How do you feel about your ability to be an ambassador for your country?
4. What are the three most important issues facing your country today?
5. Tell me about yourself.
6. What are your strengths?
7. What are your challenges?
8. What concerns you most about being an exchange student?
9. How much time have you spent away from home?
10. How did that go?
11. What kind of leadership positions have you been in? How did that go?
12. What is your greatest accomplishment?
13. How do you handle a situation in which someone encourages you to do something that you think is inappropriate?
14. How would you handle feeling homesick if it occurs?
15. The customs and foods might be different from home. How will you handle that?
16. Describe the biggest problem you have had to handle and how you did.
17. What languages do you study? How proficient are you?

For the parents:

1. How do you feel about your son or daughter going abroad for four weeks?
2. What concerns you most?
3. What countries would you prefer to avoid?
4. How flexible are you?
5. You are familiar with the Rotary Rules (4 D's). How will your child do?
6. Who initiated your child's application? Whose idea was it to consider this program?
7. What trips abroad have you taken? What was your experience?
8. How will your child do as an ambassador of our country? Flexible? Self-assured? Friendly? What concerns do you have about his or her ability to be away in a different land?
9. What medical problems does your child have?
10. What changes in the family situation could make an exchange a challenge at this time or in the foreseeable future such as job, family, illness, or financial changes? Would you expect your child to return home for a funeral?
11. How do you feel about hosting an inbound student for four weeks? Can you host a student with a different religion? What attributes would be difficult for you to tolerate? How will you make the inbound student comfortable?
12. What questions, concerns, or reservations might you have that have not already been discussed?