

## The role of the counselor

The counselor is a vital contributor to the success of a student's exchange, serving in a role that can be challenging and fulfilling. When discussing volunteers' level of involvement, it is important to be completely up front about their expected responsibilities. This article outlines the role of the counselor and provides a list of these duties.

**Counselors for inbound and outbound** YouthExchange students serve as liaisons during the exchange. The counselor's role is to facilitate communication between the student and the Rotary club, host family, and community at large. The counselor should be genuinely interested in the welfare of the student and the success of the exchange, and should serve as the primary person the student can turn to for help and comfort. Both the counselor and student should work from the beginning to establish frank and open lines of communication to promote the student's safety and well-being. Counselors should work to gain students' trust and respect so they can be in the best position to assist and advise when necessary.

It is the responsibility of the district and club leaders to properly train counselors to respond to problems or concerns that may arise during the exchange, including allegations of abuse or harassment.

Counselors are often expected to carry out the following responsibilities:

- Contact the student before arrival, and if necessary, assist with finalizing travel arrangements.
- Make sure the student calls home upon arrival.
- During the first week, work to establish a good relationship to open the lines of frank and concrete communication.
- Arrange to have copies made of important documents to hold for safe keeping, including the student's passport, visa, airline ticket, and emergency contact list.
- Accompany the student to the local school for enrollment.
- Work closely with teachers and the school to ensure a positive transition for the student into the community and activities.
- Establish the date and method for payment of the monthly allowance.
- Maintain regular contact with the student throughout the exchange.
- Send updates to the student's parents or guardians about their child's progress.
- Remind the student of important dates, such as host family members' birthdays and appointments for club visits.
- Remind the club of the student's birthday, planned club visits, and departure and arrival dates.
- Help the student adapt to the local culture and language.