

2023 Departures: Travel and Logistics Information for Participants

To Host Families – Please ensure that your participant has all details and understands departure/flight information and other day of travel logistics. They should have the name/phone number of the Area Team Travel Rep and/or the volunteer responsible for the airport check-in.

AFS Participants: It is time to start thinking about your departure and the actual day of travel and logistics.

- You and your host family will be invited to a Departure Logistics Webinar hosted by your Area Team's Departure Coordinator. This webinar will review all the logistics related to your departure, including your drop off time and location at the airport.
- Luggage – AFS-USA is not responsible for communicating airline-specific luggage requirements to participants. Please contact your airline for luggage weight limits and costs associated with check-in luggage. AFS-USA is not responsible for any luggage costs. **Also, please do not check-in or pre-pay for your luggage online before you arrive at the airport. If your flight is delayed/cancelled it will be more difficult to change your flight/receive a refund for luggage fees. In some cases, luggage fees are non-refundable if you miss your flight.**
- Your Travel Rep or local AFS volunteer will be creating a WhatsApp group to assist with communication on the day of travel. Please make sure you have shared the phone number you will use for travelling home.

If you know you will miss your scheduled flight for any reason, you MUST inform AFS-USA so your AFS Sending Partner office can be notified. If your flight is not cancelled before the flight departs, you will be considered a "no show," and your ticket will no longer be valid for you to fly. During business hours, please contact your Area Team's Departure Coordinator or Travel Rep who will inform AFS-USA staff. Outside business hours, please call the Duty Officer: 800-AFS-Info (237-4636), press 9.

Day of Travel

Packing

- Remember, you MUST have your passport in hand to travel; **passports should NEVER be packed into luggage that will be checked.** Keep a copy of the photo page of your passport in a separate location.
- Pack anything of importance (toothbrush, one change of clothes, mask, hand sanitizer, medication, etc.) in a separate, smaller carry-on bag.
- Make sure your carry-on doesn't contain any liquids over three ounces or any other prohibited items.

Arrival at Airport

- You and your host family must arrive at the airport no less than **3 to 4 hours prior to your flight departure time or at the time communicated to you by your Area Team's Departure Coordinator**. This will allow extra time for driving delays, check-in issues, and general check-in/TSA clearance delays. Should you be denied check-in or miss your flight because you have arrived too late, this may result in your having to pay ticket penalties.
- Be mindful of your possessions - cameras, cell phones, carry-on bags, and passport - at all times!

Checking In

- An AFS volunteer will meet you at your drop-off time/location. They will have your e-ticket receipt and will check you in for your flight. You must have a hard copy of any required documentation required by your country. The airlines have a right to deny your check in if you are missing this information. Many countries also have a required online form that must be completed **prior to checking in**. Make sure you have done this **before** you get to the airport.
- Make sure your luggage is checked through to your final airport and you receive the bag tags when you check in.
- You should receive boarding passes for all flights home. If you do not, ask your AFS Volunteer at the airport immediately to ask the airline to issue the boarding pass. If the airline cannot issue your connecting boarding pass, you will need to check in with the next airline in your transit airport.

Delays/Cancellation

- If you are delayed getting to the airport, you must communicate with your Area Team's Travel Rep or Departure Coordinator.
 - If your flight is delayed/cancelled after you get to your gate, you should call or WhatsApp your local AFS Volunteer (Travel Rep). You may need to work with the airline at the gate to rebook your flight.
 - If, for any reason, an AFS Volunteer is not at the airport for your departure, your host family **must** remain at the airport until your plane is in the air. Sometimes flights get cancelled after you are at the gate/on board the plane. They may need to take you back home if you are rebooked for the next day.
- If you are unsure what to do once you are at the gate or at a transit point, always speak to airline staff or contact your Travel Rep.
- If you or your host family need additional assistance on the day of travel, you must contact your local AFS Volunteer contact. If you cannot reach them, you must call the Duty Officer, or the numbers listed below.

Transits within the United States:

- We will have volunteers and/or staff on call should you have any delays or cancellations in a connection airport.
- If your return flights include a domestic flight to an international flight at an airport in the US, you should plan on making the connection from one terminal to the next on your own. We suggest downloading the airport map(s) to assist you in transit.
- Remember, if you are unsure, ask the airline staff that will be by the gate as you exit the plane in the transit airport. Be sure to check the departure screens in the airport as gates can change at the last minute.
 - If your luggage was checked through to your final airport, you do not need to claim your luggage.

Just in Case you lose your Passport

During normal business hours, the loss of a passport **must be reported immediately to the AFS-USA office at 1- 800-237-4636 and press 9.**

Outside normal business hours, contact the **Duty Officer at 1-800-237-4636 and press 9.** You will be given further instructions at that time. Please have the following information handy when you call:

- Your full name as it appears on your passport and AFS country
- If your passport is from another country, please let us know.
- Date and place of birth
- Passport number (if known)
- Place where passport was issued and date of issue (if known)

***IF A LOST PASSPORT IS FOUND AFTER REPORTING IT LOST, BE SURE TO CALL AFS BACK IMMEDIATELY SO THAT REPLACEMENT PROCEDURES CAN BE HALTED. ***

Contact Information:

Questions regarding COVID testing: 800-237-4636, press 9 for Participant Support

Email: Participant-Support-Staff@afsusa.org

Questions regarding international travel: Local Area Team Volunteer (Travel Rep)

Day of travel:

International travel after office hours: 800-AFS-Info (237-4636), press 9 for Duty Officer

International travel during office hours: 800-221-3998
800 876-2376, press 6 or 9

Remember: if you have problems on the day of travel, you must call your local Travel Representative (no emails)! If you cannot reach your Travel Representative, call the Duty Officer.