

# Pre-Departure Orientation

## **Lead Facilitator Guide**

Afternoon Session:  
Parents only





# Pre-Departure Orientation Leader Guide

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### Afternoon Session: Parents only

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### Activity (Methodology)

History of AFS (videos)

### When to do the exercise

Opening/Closing activity (**optional but recommended**)

**Time Needed:** 15-20 Min

**Group Size:** Any size

**Materials:** PC & projector

**Slide #:** None

### Objectives

- Develop understanding and insight into the AFS mission and its importance both personally, culturally, globally and historically

### Recommendations

1. It is recommended to start the Parent-focused session by showing the “AFS Timeline Video”.
2. It is recommended to end the Parent-focused session by showing the AFS video of “JFK Speaking with AFSers”.
3. Please follow up the videos by telling parents that these videos are part of the Ambassadorial session/activity in the Gateway Orientation.
4. PLEASE **DO NOT SHOW** either Video to Students because they will be watching both videos during the Gateway Orientation.

### Instructions\*

1. Play *AFS Timeline Video* by typing in the URL: <http://bit.ly/AFS-timeline>
2. Play *JFK Speaking with AFSers* by typing in the URL: <http://bit.ly/AFS-JFK>

**Please note that videos open and play in YouTube, so wi-fi/internet access is required to play the videos.**

### Activity (Methodology)

Case Studies (Open forum, group discussion)

### When to do the exercise

First activity

**Time Needed:** 30-45 Min

**Materials:** None

**Group Size:** Any size

**Slide #:** 1-3

### Objectives

- Establish appropriate ways to react to different scenarios.
- Identify personal strategies to help prevent/deal with difficult situations while their teen(s) are on program.
- Reflect on the role of natural parents in the participants' adjustment process.

### Overview

The 3 case studies are listed on pages 4-5, along with the facilitation notes.

If using the optional PowerPoint, the case studies are on slides #1-3.

Each slide has text and photos that show automatically.

### Instructions

1. Read each case study aloud and discuss each Case Study.
2. Discussion prompts for each Case Study:
  - **When hearing from your teen about their problem, how should you react initially?**
  - **Now, imagine that you are their Liaison (the local Volunteer who supports them and their host parents). As the Liaison, what would be the most effective way to support teen(s) in this situation?**
  - **Thinking about this potential situation, how can you help your teen prepare ahead of time, in case this situation does happen?**

### Debrief (after the discussing the 3 Case Studies on page 4-5)

1. What do all of the best approaches to these scenarios have in common?
2. What do these case studies and solutions say about your roles as natural parents to a teen going abroad?

## Case Study #1: Feeling Miserable

- Our teen is homesick.
- She says nobody in the family speaks English, even though they said they did in their host family application.
- She is having trouble with the language, even though she's studied it for 2 years in high school.
- She hasn't made many friends.
- She feels very lonely and has been talking about coming home.

### Facilitator Notes

- Accents, dialects, and slang can be difficult to understand.
- The amount of effort required to try and understand can be very tiring and lead to tiredness.
- Stress is caused by physical things (ex: dietary changes, jet lag, etc.)
- Homesickness and lack of new relationships/connections can lead to emotional responses.
- Encourage teens to talk with host family (and local volunteers) and share feelings, regardless of language differences.
- Talking with people can help ease anxiety and stress.
- Encourage journaling to help process emotions and experiences.
- Reassure teens that both high and low periods are normal parts of the cultural adjustment process.
- Review the "phases of cultural adjustment" in Culture Trek & coping strategies (ex: keep busy, go on errands with host family, physical activity, healthy amount of sleep, don't isolate self, etc.)
- Help to foster the relationship-building process in the host country.
- Remind teens that support from host family and local volunteers is more helpful than advice/assistance from their home country.

## Case Study #2: Doctor Visit

- Our child has been on program for 3 weeks.
- He loves his host family.
- He has had diarrhea since the second day in the country.
- His new mother's cooking is very spicy, and they eat lots of foods that are different from here.
- He just closes his eyes and eats it quickly.
- He's been taking some OTC medicine and it helps a little.
- He isn't sure if he should ask to see a doctor or just deal with it.

### Facilitator Notes

- Give positive feedback teens for eating everything that their host mother has fed them!
- Unfortunately, however, it may be doing more harm than good at this point.
- In general, doctor visits aren't unreasonable, depending on the symptoms and your teen's usual health/wellness.
- Encourage teens to talk with their host family and local volunteer honestly to get support and medical care.
- Ongoing digestive problems could be a minor problem (adjusting to new diet) or a serious problem (gastric issue).

- Remind teens that medical care and standards vary widely across the world and may differ from what they are used to in the U.S.
- English is spoken by many doctors overseas. If not, the host family or AFS will ensure that an English-speaker is available.
- Host families and local volunteers will ensure that teens receive medical care. AFS Partner staff will keep AFS-USA staff informed of all medical care.

### Case Study #3: Too Much Fun

- My teen usually makes good decisions, is responsible and doesn't give in to peer pressure.
- I saw on their Facebook page that they were tagged in some photos, which showed their friends drinking and partying.
- I like to think that my teen was invited to hang out, but they didn't know about the alcohol and weren't drinking alcohol themselves.
- I don't know what to think or how to react.
- I can't ground them since they are in their host country.
- I want them to understand that their choices can affect their AFS program as well as their future; Colleges and companies often check social media accounts!

#### Facilitator Notes

- Remind teens that oversharing on social media can have negative consequences for themselves, other people, their host family, the host community etc.
- Remind teens that postings photos or messages identifying their host school, host community, and/or host family without permission can be easily misinterpreted, misunderstood due to translation issues, and/or viewed as violating others' privacy.
- Alcohol abuse isn't tolerated by AFS and is a common reason for students to be sent home early.
- Remind teens to talk honestly with their host family and local AFS volunteers, who understand culture and can offer supportive ways to handle those situations.
- Remind teens that negative images or impressions can have permanent consequences and impact their future - college, employment, their public image etc.

### Activity (Methodology)

Safety Discussion (Open forum, group discussion)

### When to do the exercise

2nd

**Time Needed:** 15-30 Min

**Materials:** None

**Group Size:** Any size

**Slide #:** 4

### Objectives

- Discuss the effect that cultural differences can have on the perception of behavior.
- Identify topics to address with their teen(s) before departure.
- List sources of support during difficult situations.

### Overview

1. The 5 safety discussion questions can be read aloud from the Leader Guide and are listed on page 7.
2. If using the optional PowerPoint, the 5 safety discussion questions are on slide #4.
3. Click the mouse 1x to show the first question. Repeat 4x.
4. Be sure to debrief with parents.
5. Volunteers and experienced host parents, who may be helping to facilitate, can often offer reassurance on students' safety.

### Introduction

1. As a worldwide leader in secondary school exchange programs, the safety of those on our programs is our number one priority.
2. Although there are many cultural differences all over the world, these rules are consistent throughout AFS.
3. Though AFS has many rules that keep our participants safe, it is up to you, as guardians, to make sure that you also discuss your own concerns, worries, and expectations with your teen(s) BEFORE they go on program.
4. It is essential for your teen to be aware of potential risks, even if he/she has no intention of engaging in risky behavior, because it is not possible to control every aspect of a situation; risk may be caused by encounters with others.

## Discussion questions

1. What are some risky teen behaviors that worry parents? (*sex/pregnancy, bullying, peer pressure, drugs/alcohol, staying out late, sexual harassment, natural disasters, religious differences etc.*)
2. How do parents often deal with these behaviors? (*ignore it, take away privileges, switch school, send them to behavioral therapy, etc.*)
3. If one of these issues affected your teen now, how should you react? (*be supportive, communicate your concerns to your local AFS volunteer or AFS-USA, remind them to communicate openly with their host family and local volunteers, encourage them to be honest and share their feelings*)
4. How could the same issues be handled while your teen is away on program? (*tell your teen to talk honestly with their host family and local AFS volunteer*)
5. What can you do to help prepare your teen – before they leave – so that they can make wise decisions while on program? (*talk with your teen FIRST before they leave the US; remind your teen to think before making decisions*)

## Debrief

1. AFS knows there will be ups and downs and encourages students to find learning experiences in all challenges and come to AFS for help and support
2. You should give your teen space to develop and grow as well as self-advocate and pro-actively trying to solve their problems using local resources, such as their host parents and local AFS volunteers.
3. You should speak with your teen, before they leave the US, about your family expectations for their behavior overseas.
4. It is important to stick to an agreed-upon contact schedule, so as not to interfere with the participants' adjustment to life in their host countries.
5. AFS-USA urges you and your teen to both complete Culture Trek and read all the online AFS resources specific to the host country before leaving the US.



### **AFS-USA Mission**

AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

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