Activity (Methodology)
Emergency or Not? (Brainstorming, discussion)

When to do the exercise
8th

Time Needed: 30 Min
Materials: Scrap paper (optional), pens/pencils (optional), PowerPoint Slides #25-31 (optional)

Objectives
• To identify one or more challenges that they may face between now and Post-Arrival Orientation.
• To identify and record one or more coping strategies they can use to deal with anticipated challenges.
• To identify sources of support and contact information for help in difficult situations.

Introduction
1. In this activity, we have reviewed some of the laws that may impact you during your year here and we have practiced saying “No.”
2. The following are situations that students may notice or experience most immediately.
3. Discuss the situations and decide which category it fits into. The categories are:
   • Emergency: you need to contact someone outside of the family immediately. Who would you contact?
   • Concern: Make sure to discuss this with someone. Who would you discuss it with?
   • Not a problem: these situations happen sometimes as part of an exchange experience. Feel free to discuss with your host family and/or liaison.

Situations
1. The house my family lives in is dirty because there are clothes on the couch and they have a mouse trap in the kitchen. - Not a problem [SLIDE #25]
   • Standards of neatness vary among families and a mouse trap may be necessary to protect the well-being of family members.
   • It is not uncommon for older homes, especially those located in rural areas to have mouse traps.

2. My family provides ingredients (bread, cheese, meats etc.) so that I can make a sandwich for my school lunch. But I would rather buy a hot lunch. - Not a problem [SLIDE #26]
   • Host families are required to provide you with food for all of your meals, not money to purchase them, although they may choose to do so in some cases such as school lunches.
3. Church is a big part of my family’s life and they wish me to go with them every Sunday and attend the Youth Group that takes place every Wednesday evening. – Concern [SLIDE #27]
   • This could a reasonable request, depending on your religious background.
   • Participating in religious services can help you meet people and become a part of the community.
   • It’s very common for people to attend religious services for the social and community benefits as well.
   • If you are comfortable, please try to attend at least once.
   • If you are not comfortable doing so, talk to your host family and liaison about the situation.

4. My host family are “back to nature” people. They don’t have a TV or Wi-Fi in their house! There is only one computer and I have to ask to use it. - Not a problem [SLIDE #28]
   • If you do need access to the internet for schoolwork, talk to your host parents/liaison about how this can be arranged.

5. My family’s is having company over and I am being asked to share a bed with my host sibling of the same gender. – Concern [SLIDE #29]
   • Remind your family that the participation agreement that they signed requires them to provide a separate bed for you.
   • If this does not resolve the problem, then contact your liaison.

6. My host parents don’t understand how important my real family is to me. They restrict my communication with them. In my home country, I talked with my parents every day. I thought I could keep doing that by using my computer. - Not a problem [SLIDE #30]
   • Talk to your liaison about your feelings.
   • Talking to friends and family back home more often makes it harder to adjust to life in the US.

7. I need a ride to a friend’s house/school event. I told my host family one hour before I needed to leave, but they won’t take me. - Not a problem [SLIDE #31]
   • Due to the busy schedules of most host parents, you need to let them know when you will need a ride at least a day or two in advance, not 1-2 hours!
   • With your host family’s approval, try to arrange for a ride with a friend whenever possible and well in advance of any plans you may make.

Debrief
• It is important to remember that your host family is operating within their own cultural norms, values, attitudes and beliefs.
• The AFS motto “It’s not right or wrong, it’s just different.” can help you as adapt to your host family.
• If you are ever unsure about something or would like clarification/information, you can always contact your Liaison for support and guidance.