



Lions Clubs International

Exchange Youth Handbook

Table of contents

Introduction	2
Youth Camps and Exchange (YCE)	2
History	2
Definition of program.....	2
Personal data protection.....	3
General	3
Consent	3
Rights of data subject	3
General things to know	3
Financial responsibilities	3
Fundraising	3
Insurance	3
Before your departure	4
Specific YCE program rules.....	4
Communication with your Sponsor Club and YCE Chairpersons	4
Communication with your Host Family	4
Exchange Youth Orientation	5
Country presentation.....	5
International Camp.....	6
Language.....	6
Health	6
Travel documents.....	6
During your YCE experience.....	7
Your departure	7
Culture shock.....	7
Jet lag.....	7
Homesickness	7
Host Lions club	8
International Camp.....	8
Alcohol, tobacco, drugs and motorized vehicles.....	8
Extended travel or personal requests	8
Accidents/illness or emergencies	8
Issues, incompatibility with Host Family or need for removal.....	9
Confirm your travel arrangements.....	9
After your YCE experience.....	10
A warm “Thank you!”	10
Reverse culture shock.....	10
Sponsor Club follow-up.....	10
Appendix A: Exchange Youth Checklist.....	11

Introduction

Congratulations on being chosen to participate in the Lions Clubs International Youth Camps and Exchange (YCE) program! The Lions and Leos volunteering to make your exchange possible are proud of their commitment to creating and fostering understanding among peoples of the world. Your Lions and Leos sponsors and hosts will do everything they can to make your stay enjoyable and rewarding. Your willingness to make the most of your trip will determine your success as an Exchange Youth. This is an opportunity to experience different cultures while learning what Lions Clubs is all about. This YCE Exchange Youth Handbook serves as a guide for you to understand your role and expectations as an Exchange Youth of the YCE program.



Youth Camps and Exchange

History

The Youth Exchange Program was authorized by the Lions International Board of Directors in early 1961 after a successful summer-long exchange program between Lions in the United States and Japan. Later, the Youth Camp Program was authorized in 1974. Both aspects of the program were established for the purpose of furthering Lions International's first objective of "creating and fostering a spirit of understanding among peoples of the world."

Definition of program

YCE does not involve tourism, academic study or employment. Instead, youth are encouraged to use their travel opportunity to share their own culture while experiencing a new one. The YCE program is comprised of two major parts: international exchanges and international camps.

Personal data protection

General

- Your host YCE Chairperson or Host Club must seek parental consent for the personal data of any youth younger than 18 years old.
- Once your personal data has been used and the purpose of the information has been fulfilled, your YCE Chairperson is advised to destroy or delete all of your information.

Consent

- The Youth Participant Application Form must disclose in clear and distinguishable language how your personal data may be used and what you are consenting to regarding your personal data.

Rights of data subject

- YCE program participants have certain rights that must be protected, including the right to have their data erased, corrected or to request and receive what data is maintained on them.

General things to know

Financial responsibility

- Program costs may be paid by you, your family, the sponsoring Lions club (Sponsor Club) or a combination of these sources.
- In the event that immediate payments have to be made for you concerning unexpected, substantial costs, your parents/guardians and the Sponsor Club will be informed immediately and an agreement should be reached as to how these costs will be covered.
- You should have personal funds for incidentals, minor medical costs, souvenirs or possible social activities not planned by the hosts.

Fundraising

- If you are required to raise funds, ask your Sponsor Club for an official acceptance letter and other materials that will help you explain the YCE program to donors.
- Create a 5-10-minute presentation including a PowerPoint with plenty of pictures and stories for informing potential donors.

Insurance

- You must have sufficient travel, accident, life, personal property, health and liability insurance to cover any and all contingencies during the YCE program.
- You or, if a minor, your parents/guardians, must sign a release of liability.
 - This is included in your Youth Application form.

Before your departure

Specific YCE program rules

- Each YCE program could require more rules and expectations for their YCE program in addition to those in this handbook.
- Each Exchange Youth should follow the YCE policy, which you should receive upon acceptance to a YCE program.

Communication with your Sponsor Club and YCE Chairpersons

- Now that you have secured a Sponsor Club, you need to work with your Sponsor Club to find the program that is best for you.
- Use the International Directory at lionsclubs.org/yce-directory to help you identify different YCE Programs you may want to participate in.
- Once you have found a program that you are interested in applying to, you need to work with your Sponsor Club, local YCE Chairperson and the host YCE Chairperson of your desired YCE program.
 - The local YCE Chairperson will have final approval on your application for your desired YCE program.
- The host YCE Chairperson can answer all of your questions about logistics, activities and expectations for your desired YCE program.
- Communication must stay open and transparent between all parties in order for there to be a successful YCE experience.
- You and your Sponsor Club are responsible for making travel arrangements from home to the desired YCE program and back.
 - It is recommended that travel arrangements are not made until your Host Family has been secured.
 - Changes to plans should be discussed and mutually agreed upon if at all possible.
 - Last minute unavoidable changes should be communicated immediately to the Host Club, Sponsor Club, coordinating Lions, YCE Chairpersons and the Host Family.

Communication with your Host Family

- Once you have received the information about who your Host Family is, write to them directly (email, WhatsApp, text or social media).
- Get the conversation going about your hobbies, home city, family, friends and ambitions in life.
- Ask them about their culture, hobbies, home city, family, friends and interests. Some fun questions to ask might be:
 - How to say hello and good bye in the local language?
 - What types of clothing and dress are appropriate for you to wear?
 - When are national holidays, and how are they celebrated?
 - What is the predominant religion in their country, and how can you be most respectful to that religion?
 - What is the political climate like?
- Send them a picture of yourself and ask for a picture of them.
- Look ahead to the weather and climate conditions of your first 24 hours in your host country, and pack an overnight bag in the event that your luggage is delayed or lost.
- In some cases, you may have specific religious needs regarding food, clothing or space to worship. Be sure to make that clear to your Sponsor Club, YCE Chairpersons and Host Family.
 - Find out if your Host Family observes a specific religion that may change the food you eat or require you to dress a certain way.

Exchange Youth Orientation

- It is highly recommended that you attend all of the orientation sessions that your Sponsor Club should provide before you depart for your YCE program.
- Orientation topics can include, but are not limited to:
 - Rules and expectations of the YCE program
 - Before, during and after the exchange
 - Jet lag
 - Homesickness
 - Travel documents
 - Passports
 - Visas
 - Immunizations
 - Customs regulations
 - Contact information for home and Host Family in case of travel delays
 - Letters of Invitation from hosting YCE Chairperson
 - This may be helpful with securing visas or other necessary travel documents.
 - Cultural preparation
 - Food, religions and culture of host country
 - Gifts for the Host Club and Host Family
 - Roles of all the participants of the YCE Program (Host Family, Host Club, Sponsor Club, coordinating Lions and YCE Chairpersons)
 - Communicating with your Host Family, Host Club and home
 - Meeting past Exchange Youth

Country presentation

- While you are away, you may be expected to give a country presentation to the Host Club and/or at International Camp.
 - It is recommended that you prepare this presentation before your arrival.
 - Prepare to bring something small to hand out as a token from your home country such as candies
 - Other items to prepare are usually a PowerPoint presentation with information and photos.
 - Please speak to your host YCE Chairperson or Host Club for more details on what you should prepare for your country presentation.
- Fun information to include (but is not limited to) in your country presentation could be:
 - Political leaders, national heroes and major sports or entertainment figures
 - Capital, major cities
 - Your school, home town or village
 - Your daily life
 - Cultural food from your country
 - Activities done for fun in your area
 - Religions, educational systems and national holidays
 - Incorrect stereotypes about your country

International Camp

- Some Exchange Youth choose a YCE program that also has an International Camp component. This means that you will live with your Host Family prior to camp and then go to International Camp at another location. Sometimes, youth choose to continue their YCE program by staying with a Host Family after camp.
- Make sure you are prepared for what you may need for camp.
 - Communicate with the host YCE Chairperson to find out how to best prepare for International Camp.

Language

- Your program may not require the knowledge of a different language, but it would be beneficial to know an intermediate level of the language of your host country.
 - International Camps require an official language. Be sure you are comfortable speaking in that language before attending camp.
- Be patient with yourself and your Host Family as you figure out how to communicate best prior to and upon your arrival.
- Do not be afraid to ask your Host Family to speak slowly to help you have time to understand what is being said.

Health

- Vaccinations may or may not be required as part of your YCE program.
 - Consult your family physician for more information about the vaccinations typically required for your desired host country.
- If you need medicines or any other type of special assistance, be sure to have all of that prepared and enough supply to last you throughout your YCE experience.
 - It is recommended that you carry your medical information which lists any allergies, medicines or special needs that you have with you at all times while traveling.
 - It is recommended that your medication travels with you in its original prescribed containers.
 - Find out if there are reciprocal medical arrangements between your home country and host country.

Travel documents

- In most cases, in order to leave your country and return, you must have a passport.
- Sometimes, in order to enter another country, you may need to obtain a visa or secure a “Letter of Consent of Travel of a Minor Child”.
- Be sure to give yourself plenty of months ahead of traveling to work with your local embassies for passports or visas.
- It is imperative that you have travel insurance.
 - In some cases, it may seem appropriate to have liability insurance as an extra precaution.
- Make sure that you have your original travel documents as well as plenty of copies to keep in your bags and to give to your Host Family upon arrival.
 - Your hosting YCE Chairperson may need this information to help book travel for you. Be sure to have enough copies for them.
- Make sure all is checked off from the Exchange Youth Checklist (APPENDIX A).

During your YCE experience

Your departure

- Depending on the arrangement between you and your parents/guardians, the Sponsor Club can send a Lions member to take you to the airport.
 - Be sure to have a plan for your return home, loss of luggage or delayed flights or trains both in your host country and for when you return.
 - It can be helpful to photograph your luggage for proof of condition and identification if lost or damaged.
 - The Sponsor Club is responsible for your travel to and from home.

Culture shock upon arrival

- Know that it may be an adjustment arriving to a new country with a different culture and a different spoken language.
 - Common signs of culture shock include:
 - Excitement and enthusiasm (excitement about newness of host culture)
 - Irritability (frustration accepting new host culture)
 - Adaptation (accepting host culture)
 - Biculturalism (full adjustment to the host culture)
- Allow at least two days to adjust to culture shock.
- Try to communicate your needs when it comes to adjusting to culture shock and jet lag as best as you can to your Host Family.
 - Remember that this is a new experience for your Host Family as well, they will appreciate open communication to how you are doing.
- Be observant in your first few days in your host country. Try to note mannerisms like how to address elders, punctuality, religious requirements or which topics are taboo to talk about.

Jet lag

- Jet lag is very common after long travel to a different country.
- You may experience jet lag for up to 7 days after your arrival.
- Be patient and communicate your needs while you are adjusting to the time difference.
- Try not to use your phone while you are experiencing jet lag at night. It can keep you awake and perpetuate the time difference challenges.

Homesickness

- Homesickness may happen while you are away. This is normal and okay.
- Signs that you may be feeling homesick include:
 - Loneliness
 - Overwhelmed feelings
 - Longing for talking to people from home
- Try to limit the amount that you speak with your family and friends back home. That can contribute to homesickness.
- Try to be open-minded and flexible.
- Participate in the activities that your Host Family has planned for you. That will help you feel distracted from feeling homesick.

Host Lions club

- As mentioned before, you may be expected to give a country presentation to the Host Club during your stay in their country.
 - Be sure to schedule this before your arrival or shortly thereafter.
 - Your presentation may happen during International Camp instead.
 - In some cases, your country presentation will be done with other campers from your country as well.
- You may be expected to participate in Host Club activities such as club meetings or service projects.

International Camp

- Try to stay off of your phone and social media.
- Make a strong effort to not find others that speak your native language, and stay with them the whole time while at camp.
- You are at camp to experience many different cultures at once, to learn and have fun!

Alcohol, tobacco, drugs and motorized vehicles

- The use of alcohol and tobacco during a YCE program is bound by the laws of the hosting country, and the specific rules of the YCE program in which you are participating.
- The use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
- It is prohibited to operate motorized vehicles while participating in a YCE program.

Extended travel or personal requests

- Extended personal travel or leaves of absence from the exchange/camp, even if to visit close friends or relatives, are not allowed unless written permission has been obtained at least one month in advance from each of the following parties: your parents/guardians, Sponsor Club, sponsor YCE Chairperson, host YCE Chairperson, camp director, Host Club and Host Family (if applicable).
- Personal requests: You cannot request to be enrolled in school, trained or employed.
- Requests for long-term boarding and lodging is also prohibited.

Accidents/illness or emergencies

- In the event of serious illness or accident, every effort should be made to contact your parents/guardians immediately to provide them with complete information, including a doctor's diagnosis and recommended treatment.
 - By signing your application form, you and your parents/guardians give written permission for any necessary medical or surgical treatment in the event parents/guardians cannot be reached during an emergency.
 - If your parents are not able to be reached, the YCE Chairperson should try to reach your parents as soon as possible.

Issues, incompatibility with Host Family or need for removal of the Exchange Youth

- If you are having issues with any aspect of your YCE program such as your Host Family, International Camp or severe homesickness, please speak with the YCE adult you feel safest speaking to. This person may be your host parent, the host YCE Chairperson or a Lion or Leo in the Host Club.
- Incompatibility: If relations between you and the Host Family are extremely difficult, the matter should be taken to the Host Club Lions officers.
 - If an extreme problem cannot be solved after all reasonable efforts have been made locally, it could be necessary to contact the local YCE Chairperson, or in some cases, the Sponsor Club or District officers to resolve the issue.
 - If the decision is reached to return you to your home, whomever might be at fault, arrangements are to be made by the appropriate YCE Chairperson and Host Club officers at your own personal cost.
- Replacement Host Family: If your assigned Host Family withdraws after an obligation has been made, then the Host Club must provide you a qualified replacement Host Family and notify your Sponsor Club and local YCE Chairperson.

Confirm your travel arrangements

- Make sure you have all of your train and/or flight tickets for your travel home.
- Check in to your flight home as soon as you can.
- Make sure there have not been last minute delays or changes to your travel.
- Be sure to pack everything you brought and acquired while on your trip.
- Be sure that you have all of your travel documents in a secure place, and/or readily available for when you need them while you are traveling.
- Count your leftover currency and decide whether you need to exchange it before or after you go home.

After your YCE experience

A warm “Thank you!”

- Be sure to write your Host Family and Host Club a warm and generous thank you for everything they did for you while you were on your trip.
 - It may be a nice touch to thank your camp director (and staff) and hosting YCE Chairperson with a written thank you card.

Reverse culture shock and reverse jet lag

- Coming home, you could experience what is known as reverse culture shock. Reverse culture shock is the trouble adjusting back to your home life after your YCE experience.
- Some feelings that may signify that you are experiencing reverse culture shock include:
 - Feeling like your family and friends don’t understand you
 - Feeling closer to your Host Family than your own family
 - Difficulty readjusting back to your normal routine
 - Feeling lonely and distant from your new friends that you made abroad
 - Feeling lonely and distant from your friends from home
- Be patient with readjusting to being back home. It will take time.
- Be open about your experiences while you were gone.
- Listen to what happened at home while you were gone.
- Try reaching out to students that have previously done the YCE program for advice on how to overcome reverse culture shock.

Sponsor Club follow-up

- Prepare a short presentation for your Sponsor Club about your experience in your host country.
- Find out about how to stay involved with Lions as a Lion or Leo member.
- Be sure to provide the Sponsor Club and Host Club with your comments, questions and concerns about your YCE experience from start to finish.

Thank you!

A roaring “thank you” from the YCE Lions around the world for your participation in this program! Because of you, Lions are one step closer, “to creating and fostering a spirit of understanding among peoples of the world.”

Appendix A: Youth Exchange checklist

Before I leave, I will have done the following items:

- ☐ Chosen the YCE program in which I would like to attend
- ☐ Been accepted to my desired YCE program
- ☐ Initiated contact with my Host Family
- ☐ Have my necessary travel documents:
 - ☐ Passport
 - ☐ Travel insurance
 - ☐ Medical insurance
 - ☐ Visa (if necessary)
 - ☐ Invitation letter from YCE Chairperson (if applicable)
 - ☐ Enough copies of all the above listed documents
 - ☐ Packed these documents in my carry-on luggage or personal handbag
- ☐ Have my necessary travel arrangement details:
 - ☐ Departure date
 - ☐ Departure flight number
 - ☐ Departure time
 - ☐ Departure train schedule
 - ☐ Departure train ticket
 - ☐ Return date
 - ☐ Return flight number
 - ☐ Return train schedule
 - ☐ Return train ticket
 - ☐ Return departure time
 - ☐ Home arrival time
 - ☐ Necessary information of both local/host YCE Chairpersons, Host Family, Sponsor Club, Host Club and International Camp
- ☐ Have enough spending money for while I am abroad in the local currency (and any other currency that is necessary for layovers or my return home)
- ☐ If I have been required to fundraise my own personal costs, I have assembled my presentation, and have a plan to seek donations for my YCE experience
- ☐ Informed the District or Multiple District YCE Chairperson of my exchange and travel arrangements

- ☐ Attended all of the Exchange Youth Orientations
- ☐ Received the Lions International YCE Exchange Youth Handbook
- ☐ My parents/guardians have signed the indemnity agreement and a copy was sent to the Host Club
- ☐ Made a packing list that relates to what I will be doing while abroad
- ☐ Communicated any special religious or medicinal needs I may have to my Sponsor Club, YCE Chairperson and Host Family
 - ☐ Or discovered any special religious or medicinal needs of my Host Family
- ☐ Purchased my welcome and thank you gifts and cards for my Host Family and Host Club
- ☐ Prepared my country presentation for while I am abroad
- ☐ Purchased or obtained a small token to pass out during my country presentation
- ☐ Prepared any necessary items for International Camp (if applicable)
- ☐ Practiced basic phrases in the local language of my desired YCE program
- ☐ Received any required vaccinations
- ☐ Have my plan for who is picking me up from the train station or airport
- ☐ Have my plans for what to do in the event that my travel is delayed/changed or my luggage is lost

While I am away on my YCE experience, I will have done the following items:

- ☐ Confirmed all of my travel schedules to prepare for delays or early departure/arrival times
- ☐ Given my Host Family and the Host Club their gifts and cards
- ☐ Handed out my token gift during my country presentation

After I return from my YCE experience, I will have done the following:

- ☐ Prepared and scheduled my follow-up YCE experience presentation for my Sponsor Club
- ☐ If I needed to fundraise, I have scheduled a follow-up presentation with my donors
- ☐ Learned about how to become a Lion or Leo member
- ☐ Provided the Sponsor Club and Host Club with a survey of my comments, questions and concerns about my YCE experience