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To: COST student teachers placed in Christchurch, New Zealand schools.

Re: Homestay protocols.

You have demonstrated a huge amount of courage in coming all this way for your school placement which, along with your homestay, forms a welcoming and secure personal and professional setting for you to come to.

It may be several years since you were living in a family situation – having probably left home to attend college and university. You have been accepted for a school placement through the COST programme in Christchurch, New Zealand – a Receiving Site which has hosted over 100 COST student teachers since 1987. One of the features of your placement is that, unless specifically requested otherwise in your application, accommodation has been found for you with a family that is linked to the school in which you are placed - the link usually being that the family has one or more children enrolled at the school in which you have been placed and usually within walking distance of the school. The family(ies) have been specially selected by your school principal and provides you with the opportunity to not only experience New Zealand family life but also to witness the school-home connection.

Your homestay setting offers you a secure and welcoming environment from which to approach the challenges of adapting to a different culture, a different school system, a different curriculum, different accents, words and nationalities. The family will welcome you as a daughter/son as they assume responsibility for and contribute to your welfare, safety, success and enjoyment of your time in Christchurch. They, along with your associate teacher, principal, observer, COST Coordinator and other American teacher education students placed in Christchurch schools at the same time as you, form your support network while here. All of us want to do our utmost to ensure a successful outcome for you.

As well as developing teaching skills, you are also here to experience living outside your own country. This means seeing the sights of your host country, seeing your own country from afar and sharing and comparing perceptions of its culture with people you meet and from the media. Tourist and social activities can be enjoyed most once you have settled in and become familiar with the school and classroom expectations of your school placement.

The following notes are intended to assist you to adjust to your hosting family setting.

Suggestions for a successful return to family living - but away from your home!

As a general rule, while in the care of a Christchurch family please act how you would hope a student teacher who was a homestay at your own parents' home would behave. Consider the following:

1. join in with the family's everyday activities – outings, eating together, preparing meals, cleaning up after meals, washing dishes, household chores, watching TV. You are a contributing member of the family while here.
2. ask about good times, within the family routines,
 - a. for you to have access to the bathroom (shower/bath). Many New Zealand homes only have one bathroom.
 - b. when it would be suitable for you to use the internet (if the home has access). The resource is probably shared between all family members – for work and for recreation – and you should not assume that you have open and lengthy access.
 - c. seek permission to use the telephone/internet when calling overseas and arrange how the costs incurred will be met.
3. arrange how and when to pay the accommodation costs to the homestay early on in your time with them.
4. share the delights and frustrations of your day with them – they will want to know how you are adjusting and getting on
 - a. take an interest in the lives and activities of family members – including the children. Watching TV with the family is a positive social activity and you may get a Kiwi perspective of local and world news.
 - b. join in keenly with school, staff and family circle-of-friends activities.
5. keep your room tidy and clean up after yourself if using other parts of the house
 - a. if you are a smoker, please smoke outside only – and don't leave litter.
6. let your homestay parents know of your plans when going out at night/weekend
 - a. ask before inviting people you know or have met to their home.
 - b. assume that people you have invited to visit you at the homestay home will not be staying the night unless invited by the homestay parents or arranged previously with them.
7. inform your homestay parents early on if you are feeling unwell.
 - a. consume only prescribed medicines and drugs and be moderate with your intake of alcohol.
 - b. protect yourself from the sun – New Zealand experiences very high UV rays during our summer months.
8. keep in contact with folks at home – but give yourself a chance to adjust and enjoy your hosting culture. Weekly contact may be frequent enough.
9. complete your homework – the family will be expecting you to have some school work to do after school hours at least some of the time - but be careful not to isolate yourself from the social, after work activities of the family.
10. be prepared to encounter some banter about America and Americans from some people you may meet here that may not always be complimentary.

Consistently, American student teachers report that New Zealand homes are 'colder than we have in the USA.' Many homes do not have heaters in the bathrooms for example and rarely is central heating a feature of a home. Most homes, especially

during the colder months, will heat the room that is being used and turn off the heating when the last person leaves the room. Because you will be expected to be doing some homework after school hours, during colder months, you will most likely be given a heater for your room while you work. If so, please turn this off before you go to bed.

You may also encounter an electric blanket on your bed. The Kiwi-style of use of an electric blanket is that it is:

- under the bottom sheet.
- turned on some time (maybe an hour) before you go to bed.
- turned off when you get into bed.

As part of the homestay accommodation, all the bedding and towels/facecloths will be provided for you. You do not have to bring these with you from the USA.

If there are other COST student teachers in Christchurch during your placement dates, then they too form part of your support and social groups. You will have been given their contact numbers by the Coordinator. Landline telephone calls within Christchurch do not incur a charge to the subscriber.

If you find that the homestay setting does not suit you then please contact either the principal or the Coordinator and alternative arrangements will be discussed with you.

You may decide to register with the US Consulate while in New Zealand. This can be completed through the website www.usembassy.org.nz [go to the "For Americans" link at the top of the page.]

Another point is to make sure that any of your family members or friends who want to visit NZ while you are here come at the end of your school placement. It can prove quite disruptive to a student and hosts if these people come during the school placement and especially during the period of full responsibility for the classroom programme.