

# Rotary Youth Exchange



## Short-Term Exchange Program Handbook

District 5450

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## Purpose

Welcome to STEP (Short Term Exchange Program), District 5450's best-kept secret. This handbook explains-

- The types of exchanges offered by STEP
- How to apply
- How to prepare for the exchange
- What is expected of candidate and family during the exchange

## Type of Exchanges Offered by STEP

STEP has two components: **worldwide Family-to-Family (F2F) Individual exchanges and Camps/Tours**. F2F exchanges and camps/tours normally happen during the Northern Hemisphere summer. However, if the F2F exchange partners live in different hemispheres, the exchanges may be staggered between the two summers: for example, a Brazilian family will host the Colorado guest for two to three weeks in July or August. The Colorado family will host the Brazilian guest for a comparable length of time in December or January.

In the **F2F Individual exchange**, matched students spend part of their vacation with each other and with each others' families. Although we in RMRYE have established F2F-exchange contacts with certified Rotary districts in about a dozen countries, we are happy to Inquire with Rotary districts in any certified country – the Youth Exchange program is active in over 100 countries and geographical areas – with which the applicant wishes to exchange in an effort to place the applicant in a good home in his or her country of choice. The inquiries may not always result in an exchange.

STEP includes summer **camp**s and **tour**s in Asia, Europe, North America, and elsewhere. The camps and tours generally run two weeks in length and have themes, such as music, camping and hiking, sailing, bicycling, touring, beach resort, etc.

F2F exchanges are open to applicants between the guideline ages of 15 and 19 years old. Inclusive camps/tours are open to applicants between 15 and about 21 or older. New Generation Exchanges are open to applicants between the guideline ages of 18 and 25.

## How to Apply

To apply for F2F exchanges or camps/tours, follow the instructions given at link: <http://www.rmrye.org/programs/short-term-youth-exchange-step/how-to-apply-ftf-individual-exchanges-and-camps/>. Alternatively, visit [www.rmrye.org](http://www.rmrye.org) and click on the menu tabs Short-Term Exchange Program | How to Apply.

## Rocky Mountain Rotary Youth Exchange

RMRYE is a Colorado USA non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)(3) corporation affiliated with Rotary District 5450. We develop, implement, and administer the district's long-term and short-term student exchange programs (LTEP and STEP). We are a committee of Rotary volunteers working in cooperation with Rotary clubs, non-Rotarian supporters, schools, businesses, and community organizations in District 5450 to achieve Rotary's youth-exchange goal of building cultural understanding – one young person at a time.



## District-Wide Rotary Resource Persons

Students from or visiting District 5450 may contact the following Rotarian about youth exchange issues of concern. The issues may include the attitude and behavior of adults associated with the program as they relate to youth exchange housing conditions, program rules, etc.

Overall Chair: Kimberly Armitage  
27151 East Lakeview Drive  
Aurora, Colorado 80016  
[KArmitage@DenverYmca.org](mailto:KArmitage@DenverYmca.org)  
H: 303 690 6734  
W: 720 870 2221  
F: 720 870 7217

Youth Protection Officer: Chad Stamm, MD  
[www.chadstamm.com](http://www.chadstamm.com)  
[chad@chadstamm.com](mailto:chad@chadstamm.com)  
720 982 3473

STEP Coordinator: Scott White  
9762 Hanover Court East  
Henderson, CO 80640  
[scott@denvermachine.com](mailto:scott@denvermachine.com)  
W: 303 295 6000  
F: 303 295 6101  
C: 303 503 3882

## Preparing to Go Abroad

### The Basics

If you have a valid passport, check the expiration date. If the expiration date ends within three months of your planned trip, consider re-applying as soon as practicable.

If you do not have a valid passport, apply for one as soon as practicable.



## How to Evaluate Your Proposed F2F Exchange Partner

When an F2F match is offered, the families should immediately begin communicating with each other to determine if the pairing is suitable to them. Use e-mail, Skype with video, and other tools of modern communication to assess the suitability. Do not make a decision based on the application alone, but rather communicate before deciding. You *must* act quickly, but the Assessment should be thorough.

In the process of evaluating a proposed F2F exchange, develop a reasonably clear understanding of the plans for family activities to be undertaken in *each* country. Understand at the outset the host club or district rules governing travel by asking your proposed match or by asking the District 5450 STEP coordinator (STEP@rmrye.org).

Rejection is never easy. Therefore, if you choose not to do the exchange, allow the STEP Coordinator to convey the news to ensure that the situation is handled appropriately. We will attempt to find another proposed match possibly in a different part of the country or in another country of choice.

## Itinerary

Before you arrange flights, inform the STEP coordinator that you are prepared to move forward. As soon as you have arranged flight plans, e-mail your flight itinerary to the STEP Coordinator at [scott@denvermachine.com](mailto:scott@denvermachine.com). If you are in the F2F program, also email that of your host brother or sister to the STEP Coordinator.

Your club counselor in District 5450 will use the flight itineraries to arrange an in-home visit very soon after your host brother or sister has arrived in the district. The visits may be scheduled with a short lead time.

At least one more time during your host brother's or sister's stay in the U.S., your club counselor will communicate with him or her.

## Insurance

For your time abroad with STEP, you must carry the medical and liability insurance plan specified by your host country. If none is specified, then you must carry the medical and liability Insurance specified by District 5450. Budget \$60 to \$100 for 30 days of coverage.

If you are in the F2F program, your host brother or sister must carry the medical and liability insurance plan specified by District 5450 for his or her time in the U.S. with STEP.

You are free to make the insurance purchase yourself. However, plan adequate lead time.

All STEP participants must provide proof of insurance before travel.

## What to Pack

1. Pack coordinated clothes.
2. Take clothes that fit a wide range of occasions, including formal. For instance, pack one pair of dress shoes.
3. Don't take five pairs of shoes. You won't wear them.
4. If your pants fit perfectly before you go, they may not fit properly after several months.
5. Closet space abroad may be limited.
6. Don't bring non-essential electrical appliances and electronics. Make sure that you have the appropriate plug adapters and converters for the appliances and electronics that you take.
7. If you wear contact lenses, pack extra solution and lenses, and take a pair of eyeglasses.
8. Pack essential and important items in your carry-on. Consider wearing or carrying bulky or heavy clothing items onto the plane. A heavy sweater, if needed, may serve as pillow or blanket for the flight. Wearing or carrying these items onto the plane will free weight and space in the luggage or carry-on.



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9. Be prepared to have to repack your carry-on after you go through security.
10. Carry on your person telephone numbers for your host family and for important Rotary contacts abroad, your passport, and Money and/or credit cards.
11. Avoid over packing.

Research the climate and geography of the community or area where you are going before you leave. Ask your host family for advice on clothing before your arrival.

For the flight, dress as appropriate for a Rotary ambassador.

## Learn Something about Your Host Country and Culture

Study a good guidebook covering the area in which you'll be staying, its people, history, and culture. Take it with you on your trip abroad.

As appropriate, take a dictionary and phrase book. As appropriate, consider reading a book or two – even comic books – in the language of the country that you will be visiting.

## Gifts and Souvenirs

You should carry with you a small gift of appreciation for your host family/families. (Some Rotary camps abroad involve stays with several families. The gift/gifts do not have to be expensive, but something typical of Colorado or the Southwest is suggested. In addition, smaller tokens of appreciation should be brought for others who may assist you during the exchange. Again, these should be things that will remind the receiver of where they came from.

Take with you thank you cards, and write brief, sincere notes on appropriate occasions.

Your sponsoring Rotary club should provide you with several club banners to present to your host club. Banners received in exchange should be presented to your sponsoring club upon your return.

## Guideline for Host Parents

Host parents, treat your host son or daughter the way you would want your own child to be treated. Consider their safety and comfort as well as the overall experience.

If yours is a family in which both parents work and your own children have long or frequent periods of absence from the home, please take the time to make arrangements to ensure your host student isn't home alone all day. Call on the hosting club for help if needed.

While hosting the match, a family is expected to pay their guest's expenses for family activities; for example, dining. Hotel costs if the family takes their guest on vacation. For this reason, exchange families tend to plan activities that are roughly comparable. If you intend for your guest to pay for some or all of the expense for a planned activity, then you must make the facts known to the student and his or her family before the activity.



## Time on the Exchange

### Assimilation into a Host Family

If your exchange involves your assimilation into a family, you should generally not address your host father and mother as Mr. and Mrs., but rather you will probably end up addressing them by their first names. Ask how they wish you to call them. You might ask before you arrive, since things might be hectic on arrival.

In many host-family situations, you will have your own room. However, you should also be prepared to share a room with a host sibling of the same gender as you. Of course, you will have your own bed.

Bear in mind that your host/s are under no obligation to adjust to your ways and customs, or to treat you like a special guest. If you are the guest of a family, you will be expected to accept the normal discipline and supervision of the family and settle into the family's routine, which may differ from the routine to which you are accustomed.

If problems arise while you are on exchange, quickly contact the District 5450 STEP Coordinator ([scott@denvermachine.com](mailto:scott@denvermachine.com)).

### Homesickness

You may experience homesickness, particularly after the excitement and experiences of settling in and meeting new people have passed. If homesickness occurs, try to keep yourself occupied with activities. Do not isolate yourself. An open and frank discussion with your host parents may help to ease the situation. On the other hand, extensive and frequent communications back home may only worsen your sense of homesickness. You will have to find your own method of coping.

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<sup>1</sup>The report form is used by participants in both the long-term and short-term program. Thus, some fields may not be appropriate in all situations. For instance, the field describing performance in school is appropriate for the long-term program, but not the F2F program. Ignore any field that may not be appropriate.

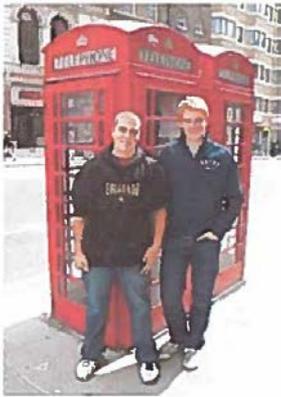


## Have an Open Mind

There are usually at least two points of view on most issues, so an open mind should be kept on controversial issues such as race, religion or politics. You should try to see the other point of view, even if you do not necessarily agree. Above all, be tactful and diplomatic when your hosts express views opposed to your own.

By the same token, be open and honest in expressing your own opinions, especially about your home community, state and country. There is no perfect place anywhere on the earth; you will want to talk about both the good and the not so good; anyone who presents nothing except sweetness and light will at best, be dismissed as shallow. Share your feelings and thoughts; just be sure to think things through first, so you don't end up with your foot in your mouth.

Don't let anyone lead you into saying negative things about anyone or anyplace, which you might regret later.



## Finances

For use in an emergency, take and set aside the foreign-currency equivalence of \$100 or take a credit card or an ATM cash withdrawal card. Take additional money as needed for incidental and personal use.



In the F2F exchange, the hosting family is expected to pay their guest's expenses for family activities. For this reason, exchange families tend to plan activities that are roughly comparable.

## Personal Behavior

While you are being hosted as a Rotary Youth Exchange student, Rotary considers you ambassador for your country, Rotary, your family, and yourself. The manner in which you conduct yourself may determine whether your host club and your host family will wish to host another Rotary student in the future.

Always ensure that you are appropriately dressed and groomed for the occasion.

## The Five Ds

**DRUGS** – Participants are not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs.

**DRINKING** – The following represents District 5450's rule concerning alcohol consumption while you are a STEP.

Outbounders are to obey the most stringent of the following conditions:

- The law of the land visited; ignorance of the law is not a defense.
- The rules imposed by the Rotary district visited; explicit understanding is to be sought by you.
- The expressed wishes of the host and natural parents are to be sought and obeyed.
- Explicit permission for the specific situations is to be sought.
  - Example: You communicate with your host and natural parents and asks for permission to walk with host sibling to a nearby disco, where you expect to drink legally in moderation.
  - Natural parents, host parents, and you assume all risk for decision and actions.
- If allowed, drinking will be restricted to a public and legal social setting or to the presence of the host parents or qualified Rotary officials
- Absolutely no alcohol impairment (or worse), as defined by Colorado law.
- Sensible mature and Rotary-worthy behavior is demanded at all times.

**DRIVING**-Participants are not permitted to operate or drive a motorized vehicle<sup>2</sup> of any kind while in host country. If you have returned home, but are still participating in the F2F exchange program, you may operate a motorized vehicle according to terms of your driver's license. However, you may not drive your host brother or sister while in your home country.

**DATING** – Participants must avoid serious romantic activities while on exchange. Participants must abstain from sexual activity and promiscuity.

**DUMB STUFF** – Do not break the law. Do not act like an "Ugly American." Do not do dumb stuff.

## Rules and Conditions of Short-Term Exchange

1. You must obey the laws of the host country. If found guilty of violating any law, you can expect no assistance from your sponsors or native country. You must return home at your own expense as soon as released by authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> Most medical insurance required by Rotary will not cover medical expense benefits for any loss, treatment, or services resulting from, or contributed to, injuries sustained while operating a motorized vehicle of any kind, including two, three and four wheeled vehicles. This includes but is not limited to automobiles, motorcycles and motorized dirt bikes of any kind, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles and watercraft. However, in Alaska all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles are typically covered as a means of transportation. This exclusion is typically waived for students who are located in Bermuda with regard to travel on a small motorcycle or moped that is not more than 50cc in capacity; the student must have a valid license to ride the motorcycle or moped. This exclusion is typically waived in relation to amusement park rides, lawn mowers or operating a golf cart while on a golf course.



2. You are not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs. Medicine prescribed to you by a physician is allowed.
3. The illegal drinking of alcoholic beverages is expressly forbidden. Students who are of legal age *should* refrain. If you are staying with a host family and are offered an alcoholic drink, it is permissible to accept it under their supervision in the home.
4. You may not operate a motorized vehicle or participate in driver education programs [while abroad].
5. You will be under the host district's authority while you are an exchange student and must abide by the rules and conditions of exchange provided by the host district. Parents or legal guardians must not authorize any extra activities directly to you. Any relatives you may have in the host country will have no authority over you while you are in the program.
6. If your program includes schooling, you must attend regularly and make an honest attempt to succeed.
7. You must have travel insurance that provides medical and dental coverage for accidental injury and illness, death benefits (including repatriation of remains), disability/dismemberment benefits, emergency medical evacuation, emergency visitation expenses, 24-hour emergency assistance services, and legal services, in amounts satisfactory to the host Rotary club or district in consultation with the sponsor Rotary club or district, with coverage from the time of your departure from your home country until your return.
8. You should have sufficient financial support to assure your well-being during your exchange. Your host district may require a contingency fund for emergency situations. Unused funds will be returned to your parents or legal guardians at the end of your exchange.
9. You must follow the travel rules of your host district. Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the host Rotary club or district with proper adult chaperones [or control and oversight]. The host district and club and your parents or legal guardians must approve any other travel in writing, thus exempting Rotary of responsibility and liability.
10. You must return home directly by a route mutually agreeable to your host district and your parents or legal guardians.
11. Any costs related to an early return home or any other unusual costs (language tutoring, tours, etc.) are the responsibility of you and your parents or legal guardians.
12. You should communicate with your host family, if applicable, prior to leaving your home country. The family's information must be provided to you by your host club or district prior to your departure.
13. Visits by your parents or legal guardians, siblings, or friends while you are on exchange are strongly discouraged. Such visits may only take place with the host club's and district's consent and within their guidelines.
14. Talk with your host club counselor or other trusted adult if you encounter any form of abuse or harassment. ●●

●● Abuse is the improper usage or treatment for a bad purpose, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Sexual abuse is the forcing of undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another, when that force falls short of being a sexual assault. **The term also covers any behavior by any adult towards a child to stimulate either the adult or child sexually.**

Harassment covers a wide range of offensive behavior. It is commonly understood as behavior intended to disturb or upset. In the legal sense, it is behavior which is found threatening or disturbing. Sexual harassment refers to persistent and unwanted sexual advances, where the consequences of refusing are potentially very disadvantageous to the victim.

## Recommendations for a Successful Exchange

While the following recommendations have greater value for LTEP student, they also have value for participants in F2F exchanges and short-term camps.

1. Smoking is discouraged. If you state in your application that you do not smoke, you will be held to that position throughout your exchange. Your acceptance and placement is based on your signed statement. Under no circumstances are you to smoke in any bedrooms.
2. Body piercing or obtaining a tattoo while on your exchange is not allowed, *for health reasons*.
3. If placed in a host family, respect your host's wishes. Become an integral part of the family, assuming duties and responsibilities normal for a student of your age or for children in the family.
4. Learn the language of your host country. Teachers, Rotary club members, and others you meet in the community will appreciate the effort. It will go a long way in your gaining acceptance in the community and with those who will become lifelong friends.



5. Attend Rotary-sponsored events and, if living with a family, host family events, and show an interest in these activities. Volunteer to be involved; do not wait to be asked. Lack of interest on your part is detrimental to your exchange and can have a negative impact on future exchanges.
6. Avoid serious romantic activity. Abstain from sexual activity.
7. Choose friends in the community carefully. Ask for and heed the advice of host families, counselors, and school personnel in choosing friends.
8. Do not borrow money. Pay any bills promptly. Ask permission to use the phone or computer, keep track of all calls and time on the Internet, and reimburse the costs you incur.
9. Limit your use of the Internet and mobile phones. Excessive or inappropriate use is not acceptable.
10. If you are offered an opportunity to go on a trip or attend an event, make sure you understand any costs you must pay and your responsibilities before you go.

## Top 10 Tips on How to Be a Successful Exchange Student

While the following recommendations have greater value for LTEP student, they also have value for participants in F2F exchanges and short-term camps.

1. Do not ask to do things that you know you may not do.
2. Write thank-you notes and express appreciation often.
3. Get involved. Stay engaged. Share news from home with your host family. Be willing to try new things.
4. When arriving at your host family, immediately ask the parents about the rules and responsibilities you have as a member of their family.
5. Learn to strike a happy balance between spending too much time alone in your room and spending too much time with your host family. Remember everybody needs some time to be alone; you do, and so do your host parents and brothers and sisters.
6. Always make sure your host family knows where you are. Be sure to inform them where you are going and when you will return. If you are late, your family will worry. Call them if you cannot return home by the expected time.
7. If your host parents are doing a project around the house, offer to help. Always offer to help set the table or clean up after meals.
8. Make your bed in the morning, and keep your room neat. Coordinate your laundry schedule with the rest of the family.
9. Don't spend too much discretionary time on the computer, browsing, Skyping, and such. Never text while at the dinner table. If being driven by an adult, do not talk on the cell phone or text during all or most of the trip. The driver is not a chauffeur.
10. Try to be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try to live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations. - Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

## The Four-Way Test



Of the things we think, say or do ... Is It the TRUTH? Is It FAIR to all concerned? Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned? These four questions make up the Rotary 4way test or code of ethics.

By using this test in every-day predicaments, including those that could arise during an exchange, you would be taking the moral high ground. This path is not always the easiest one, but it is generally the most personally satisfying one in the long run. Truthful, fair, friendly, and Beneficial to Others: apply these concepts!

## Interviews

If interviewed by the press, radio or television at home or abroad, always have your host parent present. Always be tolerant and never critical of your host country. Its customs, religions, procedures may be a little strange to you, but they are generally appropriate to the people of the country which evolved them ... otherwise they would find another way.

Carelessly uttered remarks made on public platforms or during interviews may cause serious embarrassment to the cause of friendship to which you espouse. The fact that the people in your host country might be critical of their government and its policies, or their way of life in that country, gives you no right to be similarly critical...after all, you haven't lived there all your life. Such criticism by you may cause them to become very protective and nationalistic, not to mention resentful of your comments.