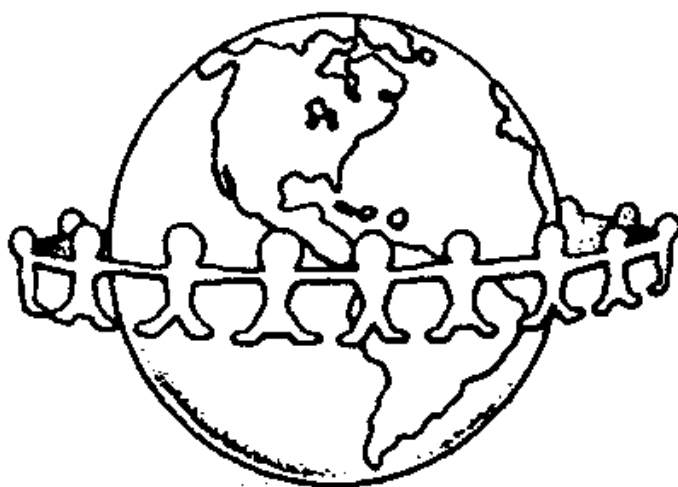


EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INTERACTIONS, INC.

# Host Family Handbook

*A guide for American host families hosting international students*



## E. C. I.

## English Language Program

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## **ABOUT ECI ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM (ECI ELP)**

### Mission

**E.C.I. English Language Program exists to serve the international students by preparing them to use the English language for the academic, social, and cultural challenges of life in American colleges and universities.**

### Educational and Cultural Interactions, Inc.

Educational and Cultural Interactions, Inc. (ECI) was founded in 1996. ECI operates in two (2) campuses: one located on the campus of University of Dallas and the other one on the campus of Randall University. Both campuses are accredited by ACCET and CEA.

E.C.I. offers a curriculum that is consisted of core ESL classes which incorporate all the components of English language learning skills: listening and speaking, reading, and vocabulary, writing, and grammar—usage of the language and academic elective classes that compliment the core classes and help with the achievement of the goals and learning outcomes contributing to the students' readiness to function successfully in a high academic learning environment.

### **Academic Excellence**

- Students that successfully complete the program will be academically ready to take high school and/or college courses. To accomplish this, all of the classes will concentrate in building towards high school and college level work. Upon completion of the program, students will have participated in preparing and giving group and individual presentations, conducting research and writing research papers, writing and documenting composition papers, taking notes effectively, reading for comprehension and speed, and observing actual high school and college level classes.

### **Cultural Acclimation and Appreciation**

- Students will be equipped to survive socially and emotionally in the American culture of college life. The program offers opportunities for the students to live with caring American host families and participate in a variety of activities in the community. The students will also learn to appreciate the diverse ways of living in the United States and the many cultures represented.

### **Professional Faculty/Staff**

- ECI English Language program seeks out qualified teachers in the area of ESL. In order to hire quality teachers, an intensive process is used to evaluate the quality of a prospective employee. Employees are also required to participate in professional development on a continual basis. Teachers will participate in workshops, reading professional material, self-evaluations, program analysis, observation reviews with the program director, and action research.

## HOST FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

### What to Provide

#### **Room and Board**

ECI ELP host families are responsible for providing student(s) with a bedroom that contains a bed, a place to store clothing, and a desk. Students may share a room with an older child or adult in the family of the same sex, but the student must have a separate bed. It is best to provide the student with a separate room if at all possible.

Board includes breakfast and dinner. Since students come from various countries and backgrounds, you may want to check with the student as to what s/he likes and does not like. One way to clarify this is by taking the student to the grocery store and having him/her point out foods that s/he likes. The longer the student is in the USA, probably the more s/he will begin to like and try other foods. Please put yourself in the student's place and try to think how you would feel visiting a strange country with strange tasting food. Be patient with the student as s/he tries new types of food. A good thing to keep in mind is that when hosting students from Asia is that they usually are not used to eating many sweets, and what they consider to be dessert is almost tasteless to Americans. Try not to overwhelm Asian students with too many sweet items on the menu. On our website, you will see that we tell students the following about typical American meals

Typical American meals consist of:

#### **BREAKFAST**

**Food** (*usually one of the following*)

- Cold cereal, oatmeal, fruit, bread (bagel, toast and jelly)

**Drink** (*usually one of the following*)

- Orange/Apple juice, milk, hot tea, coffee

#### **DINNER**

- A meat (beef, pork, chicken, or fish)
- One or two vegetables (usually canned or frozen)
- Bread (biscuit, dinner roll, etc.)

Students are also notified that Americans usually eat two or three good suppers a week while the other meals might consist of: ordering a pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers, chili, etc. Americans usually live very busy lives and do not take the time to enjoy a large supper. We realize that some families do not even sit down and eat at the table, but eat when it is convenient. Notify the student of your eating schedule and habits.

### Transportation

Host families will take the student to school and picking him/her up. If the host family is not able to do so, arrangements should be made by the host family. ECI ELP can help find contacts for car pooling by giving names of other host families or employees that might be able to help. After the student arrives from his/her country, it would be a good idea to give him/her a tour of the area/city in which you live and point out places of interest or places that might be helpful for the student to know about. Many students buy their own cars after 2-4 weeks of their stay. The student can also use the city transportation.

The host family is not to act as “chauffer” but should try to help the student when convenient. You should remember that many students come from countries where they can jump on a bus or subway and go where they want when they want. It is a big shock for an international student to come to the USA and find limited public transportation and be confined to the house. Many students that attend ECI ELP are very independent and not used to small towns and everything being so spread out.

The goal of the host family program is to help students to be able to adapt to the American culture and make friends. All our students are far away from home and host families act as the student’s “second family.” Since students are a part of the family, the students should be allowed and encouraged to participate in family and community activities. Many families designate one day of the week as a family day and trips are made to the mall, etc. Inform the student of your family plans and include them in making decisions and plans. It is also good to note here that depending on the student’s country of origin will depend a lot on how much the student participates. Asians are usually more reserved and prefer to stay behind a closed door, study, or be with friends from the same country. This type of behavior is typical of that culture. Families that find themselves with a student like this should work harder at including the student but not do so with force. If the student has a bad attitude and refused to communicate, please contact the ECI ELP director so that the issue can be dealt with and before communication is totally lost. On the other hand, students from a European or Hispanic background might tend to go to the opposite extreme and not want to put time into studying. Host families should help their student find a balance.

### Family and Community Activities

Students that come to ECI ELP come from various religious backgrounds. A student’s religious preference is provided on the student’s home stay application. You will notice that many students do not have a strong religious background but are more “nominal” when it comes to religion. If your family goes to a church or synagogue to worship, you may invite the student but not make it a requirement. You will find that most students will try it for the cultural experience and may continue to go if friends are made.

### Church Attendance

ECI ELP’s curriculum is designed to accommodate students with various levels of English proficiency. It is very rare to have a “true novice” come through the program. The majority of the students have a background of at least 3-4 years of studying English. This does not mean that a student can communicate well verbally. Remember that much of their instruction is grammar based which means they probably have not had much practice in conversation. They usually have a good understanding of the structure of the English language but you may find it necessary to communicate using a dictionary or translator.

### Help with English

Telephone and  
Computer Use

All students come with telephones and computers. They use the internet for social purposes and homework and school assignments. Therefore student should have accessible connection to internet.

Money

## **WHAT HOST FAMILIES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO PROVIDE**

Medical Insurance

Beyond room and board expenses, the host family is not responsible for giving the student any type of financial assistance. This means that the host family is not responsible for extra activities in which the students chooses to participate (movies, theme parks, restaurants, etc.). If it is a family activity, an agreement should be made as to who will pay for it before going to the activity. If the student needs money for emergency purposes, the director of ECI ELP should be contacted.

We strongly advise the students to be covered with health insurance. The host family is not responsible for any medical expense that the student may have.

Families are also not required to cover a student under their automobile insurance. If a family agrees to allow the student to drive their car (this is optional and is discouraged), the student must pay to be added. Of course, a student must have a valid international license or an Oklahoma driver's license.

Housing Friends  
and Natural  
Family Members

Host families are not expected to house visiting friends or family members of the student. It is a great experience for the natural parents to meet the host family, but some families may not have space available to accommodate them. If this is a problem, try to find other options for the family such as a nearby hotel or friend's house. It is always nice to invite the natural parents for supper. It is very rare, though, that a family member or friend will come to visit from another country.

The student may not have friends of the opposite sex stay overnight. If a boyfriend/girlfriend visits the student, other housing arrangements will have to be made. A friend of the same sex may stay the night or visit if approved by the host family. The student should not bring in visitors on a regular basis, because this would prevent participation with the host family.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Responsibility

All students are expected to act as mature, responsible adults. This includes picking up after themselves (maintaining a clean room, cleaning up if they decide to cook something, etc.). Some students may come from homes where most “chores” and work around the house is done by the mother or a maid. Host families should communicate clearly how the responsibility is divided in the house. Students can participate in things such as setting the table, taking out the trash, etc. Most host families have a set of guidelines that are unwritten but very well-known and followed by other members of the house. It is nice to put applicable ones in writing for the student and to explain them.

### Courtesy & Communication

The student is expected to be courteous at all times. Students should respect house rules, help with regular household chores, and be willing to operate on the host family’s schedule. Remember that your house is not a hotel or a place where the student just sleeps and eats. Students are also expected to communicate with the host family about plans they might have and when they will return.

Communication is a real key when working with your international student. There might be times when misunderstanding occurs, but if the host family and student are properly communicating, many hard feelings can be avoided.

### Unrealistic Expectations

#### **Babysitting**

Host families should not use the student as a babysitter. Students are not responsible while studying here in the USA for taking care of children that do not belong to them.

#### **Curfew**

Most of the students that join ECI ELP are mature adults. Because of this, a curfew of 10:00pm or earlier is not reasonable. Students that consistently come home late (after midnight) affecting their participation with the host family should be talked to and advised. If the unacceptable behavior continues, contact ECI ELP director. Most students will be more serious about their studies and not make it a habit to stay out late. Weekends are an exception as many students will want to be with friends and stay out late. The best way to solve disrupting those that are asleep is to give the student a key to the house.

### Communication

Before your student arrives in the USA, you will most likely have ample opportunity to communicate with the student through e-mail and possibly a phone call if arrangements are made early enough. We encourage the host family to inform the student about as many things as possible before the student

## **BEFORE THE STUDENT ARRIVES**

arrives. Basic information on the family is always provided to the student, but it is much better for the student to hear it directly from the family. Photos are also excellent to send to the student and to request from the student.

### Arrival Information

ECI ELP will always provide the host family with the arrival information of the student. Host families are expected to greet the student at the airport unless a job does not allow this or an emergency comes up. Students need to have that initial contact with the family. Students may seem very shy at first, and it may take a while for the student to open up and talk. Remember that the student has probably just made a 8-14 hour trip on a plane, there is a time difference, and s/he may feel embarrassed of his/her language skills.



## **FIRST WEEK AFTER ARRIVAL**

### Meeting the Student at the Airport

When you go to the airport to pick up your student, you should make a sign that has his/her name (first and last) on the sign along with the school's name. It is best to greet your student with a smile and hug. Just being kind and showing some affection will be nice in making the student feel welcome. As mentioned before, s/he may not speak very much after the long trip to the USA. Try to be sensitive to how the student feels. Find out if s/he is hungry and stop and eat or get something for the student.

### A Tour of the House and Area

The student may arrive late and be very tired. It is nice to show the student his/her room and bathroom at least. Then, it is best to let the student unpack and sleep. Inform the student of your plans for the next day as you might have to work if it is not the weekend. If the student does not need to be at class the next day, inform him/her of what to do and possibly prepare a breakfast and lunch and show the student where it is. The student will probably not feel comfortable preparing his/her own lunch the first few days until s/he is familiar with the kitchen.

After a day or two, it is a good idea to give the student a tour of your neighborhood and area where you live. Show the student places of interest and places that might be important for him/her to know about (bank, post office, etc.).

### Federal & State

Students are expected to obey state laws and host families are expected to enforce them. Students will be well versed during orientation (their first day of school) on the federal and state laws. Just to remind

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

### Laws

you of some, they are the following:

- If a student is arrested, or if it is reliably confirmed that the student has acted illegally, program sponsorship will be revoked, resulting in early return as soon as legally possible to the home country at the expense of the student or student's parents.
- Drinking of alcoholic beverages, including beer and wine is not permitted while in the program and is illegal in the USA for persons under 21 years of age.
- Smoking is illegal in Oklahoma for persons under 18 years of age. If the student is a smoker, he/she must comply with all smoking restrictions imposed by the host family, any public or private venue, and state laws.
- The student must not buy, sell, possess, or use illegal drugs of any kind or use any controlled drugs, unless prescribed for him/her by a physician or other health professional. If the student is taking prescription drugs, the dosage and length of time of use for each drug must be listed on the admissions application. The student must not associate with any persons involved in illegal drug-taking or drug trafficking.
- Students must not commit or take part in any act of violence against another person or property.
- Shoplifting and theft are illegal and may lead to criminal charges.
- Driving a car without a driver's license is illegal in all states.
- It is illegal for students on non-working visas to take regular employment while in the USA, unless permission has been granted from INS. A student can apply to INS in order to obtain permission after one year of studying in the USA.

### Immigration Laws

- The earliest a student can enter the United States is 30 days before the program start date.
- A student has 60 days to return to his/her country after completion date of program. Any student that is authorized to withdraw before completion date has 15 days to return to his/her native country. If a student withdraws without authorization, he/she must return to his/her country immediately.
- All students must report an address change while in the United States within 10 days of moving (even dependents need to be reported).
- The student is responsible to request an extension on his/her I-20 before the completion date expires. Request should be made to the director of ECI ELP.
- To transfer to another school, a student must
  1. Apply and be accepted to the "transfer school."
  2. Inform current school of the transfer, and no later than the last day of the current program.
  3. Inform "transfer school" of transfer date.
  4. Complete transfer process no later than 15 days after first day of class of "transfer school."
- F-2 dependents cannot enroll in a full-time program except for vocational or recreational purposes. F-2 children may enroll in elementary or secondary schools full-time (kindergarten through twelfth grade).
- An F-1 student may not work during the first year but may apply for employment after one year of study. Check with the student advisor.
- ECI ELP is required to report the following to immigration:
  - A student that is not in status or has not reported to the school
  - A student's change of name
  - A student that has finished the program early
  - Disciplinary action against a student for crime
  - Any notice that immigration (SEVIS) requests from the school
  - The student's start date for the next session
  - A student's current address

### Absences & Tardiness

For additional information or to obtain INS forms, visit [www.immigration.gov](http://www.immigration.gov).

**Students are required to attend all classes, but we understand that there are times when you need to miss class. However, in order to be allowed to pass a level you must attend a minimum of 85%.**

## **ECI ELP POLICIES**

That means that you can miss no more than 3 days per session . Each session is 4 weeks long. The minimum attendance required to pass a level is 85 academic hours out of 100 academic hours assigned per each session. A student must inform the Coordinator at least one day prior to being gone or absent. The class starts at 9:00AM Monday through Friday. If the student arrives in class after 9:15 he/she must report to the administration office in order to validate the lateness . The student may be allowed to enter the class immediately if there is a legitimate reason for being late ( traffic jam, emergency situation , and the like). Otherwise the student will be given an assignment to work in the office lobby until the first break at 10:30 when he/she will be allowed to enter the class and will be counted absent for that part of the day.

If the student departs the class early the student will be counted absent if he/she has not reported legitimate early departure reason to the office.

*Travel with the Host Family*

If the host family takes a trip out of town, if possible, it is courteous to make an invitation to the student. Please check with ECI ELP about the student's status before asking the student. If the student does not have many absences and would like to go, it would be a great opportunity for the student to learn more about the American culture, know other areas, and meet other people and bond with the host family. It is up to the family as to whether or not to pay for the expenses on the trip. If the student decides not to attend the trip, arrangements should be made by the host family for the student to go to and be picked up from school. If the family and student are comfortable, it is better for the student to stay at the house by him/herself instead of moving to a temporary host family. This can be very disturbing to the language process.

*Probation and Dismissal*

A student may be placed on probation if a major offense has occurred (disrespect, illegal actions, violations of policies, etc.) or if a minor offense has occurred such as: his/her grades and/or attendance are very low. It is the decision of the program director and president of the seriousness of the offense. If the student has been warned more than once or has committed a major offense, the student may be expelled from the program and no refund will be given. The following steps will be taken if probation or expulsion is necessary.

1. The program director will approach the accused student with verbal information of the actions in which s/he is being accused. The program director will then make the individual aware of any action that needs to be taken, if any. If it is something minor, a warning may be all that is necessary.
2. If there is good evidence that s/he is guilty or the problem continues after the warning, the program director will informally investigate by speaking with the necessary people (instructors, witnesses, president, etc.). If necessary, there will be an informal meeting between the program director, president, other informants, and the individual who was warned, placed on probation, or expelled.
3. From the first approach, the grievant will have two days to file a written and verbal report defending him/herself of the acts in which s/he is being accused. This should be given to the director.
4. Within two days of receiving the report, the program director will set up a hearing with the president, program director, informants, and the student placed on probation or expelled.
5. A decision will then be made by the program director and president on what action, if any, should be taken. This decision will be based on evidence and the well-being of the program and other students.
6. The accused may appeal by giving a written report to the. The director and president will then review the appeal and notify the accused within five days. A student may be placed on Reduced Course Load if the student is having difficulties academically. This is done at the discretion of the teachers and administrators. The following constitutes academic difficulties:

*Initial difficulty with the English language and reading  
Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods  
Improper course level placement, etc.*

*Moving to a Different Host Family*

ECI ELP does its very best to make compatible matches with students and host families. If for some reason the match does not work after the student arrives and the student and host family are very uncomfortable around each other, ECI ELP will do its best to move the student as soon as possible. ECI ELP prefers to resolve the situation if possible, but we realize that there are some instances when moving the student is the best thing before hard feelings occur. The key to being a good host family and working with international students is understanding the culture and communicating. The feeling of being uncomfortable might very well be because of miscommunication or a misunderstanding. If need be, ECI ELP will set up a meeting with the host family and student.

## CULTURAL CHALLENGES

### Culture Shock

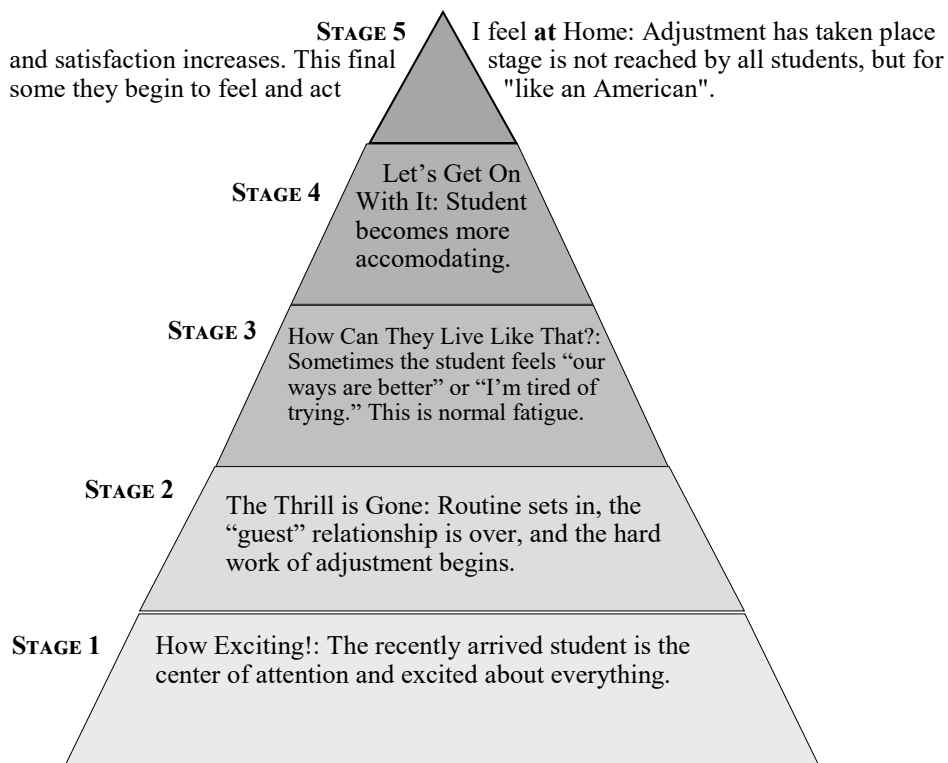
Satellite communication and supersonic travel have made our world smaller and smaller. Around the globe young people eat hamburgers and wear jeans. But, there are differences. It is to experience these differences that our students have chosen to come to the United States and because of these differences that your family will find it exciting to get to know your student. You will want to share with him or her what is uniquely American and at the same time learn about the customs, manners, and lifestyle of your student's homeland.

Your student may sometimes do something that annoys you, yet that is perfectly acceptable in his or her own home. Students have so much to learn so quickly, you need to let them know that you are supportive in the adjustment. Ask your student to explain differences when s/he encounters them. It is your responsibility to let it be known when certain behaviors are unacceptable. Students need this information, but not as criticism. The beautiful part is that you both learn during the adjustment period and acquire respect for the other's way of doing things. This is what makes the exchange interesting and how we learn from having a student.

There will be times when you will be surprised by your student's behavior and values. And, there will other times when some of his/her habits may be perplexing, or s/he may not seem to accept warmly all that you value most about America.

It is important that everyone involved in a hosting experience recognize that there will be difficult times. However, the experience has an "adjustment cycle" that is predictable.

### THE ADJUSTMENT CYCLE



Hygiene &  
Personal Habits

Hygiene can be a very sensitive area to deal with and embarrassing to the say the least. Each country has different concepts of what is considered “good hygiene.” There are some countries that practice bathing less frequently and changing clothes less often. During orientation at ECI ELP students are carefully instructed on this subject, but this does not mean that it will not be an issue. Orientation will cover changing clothes and underclothes daily, using deodorant, bathing, washing clothes, brushing teeth, etc. Host families need to remember that they play a big part in helping the student adapt to the American culture. Hygiene is a big issue and “bad hygiene” can be very offensive to certain cultures. It is important for the families to reinforce what is considered good and bad hygiene in the USA. After a few weeks or you are comfortable with the student, you might need to sit down and talk about some hygiene issues or personal habits that are not very acceptable in the USA. You should help the student understand because it is very likely that s/he is not aware of being offensive. If you are not comfortable in talking with your student about hygiene and personal habits, you can call ECI ELP and one of the teachers or administrators will address this issue with the student in person.

Time

Remember that each culture has a different concept of time. You may have a student that does not consider being on a time a very important habit, and you may have others that become very frustrated with you if you are late a few times. It is good to sit down with the student and discuss the importance of being on time. If the student decides to participate in certain activities such as church, then you should inform him/her of the time that you leave each week.

Language Skills

You may find that it is very difficult to communicate with your student. The majority of students that attend ECI ELP have a background in the English language and can communicate enough to get around. You may need to use a translator or dictionary at the beginning, but you should encourage your student not to be stuck on using a translator. It may be challenging to communicate with some students, but you will find that it is enjoyable to watch the student flourish over the next few weeks.

“Guest  
Mentality”

Some students enter into a host family setting with what is called “guest mentality.” They have the idea that the host family gives them transportation, feeds them, but is not involved with their lives. ECI ELP does its best to provide different housing options for students (dorms, hotels, host families, and apartments). We realize that not everyone is fit to live with a host family. The students are well informed of what the stipulations are when applying to live with a host family, but some still come into a host family setting with the “guest mentality.” If your student has this mentality, sit down and talk with the student and share your expectations of having an international student in your house. Also, let the student share on how s/he views the host family. It could be that the student is going through extreme culture shock or a multitude of other difficulties. Try to find out the real problem. If the student refuses to become part of the family and just wants to live in the house and be left alone, please contact the director of ECI ELP. It could be that the student will need moved to a dorm, apartment, or hotel.

If

## **COMPENSATION**

### Payments

The host families will be paid directly from the students. ECI will not collect any money on behalf of the host families.

### “Finder’s Fee”

ECI will charge the students a stipend of \$150 for provision of the host family.

## **STEPS IN BECOMING A HOST FAMILY**

1. Fill out a Host Family Application for American families (available at [www.eciprograms.com/english](http://www.eciprograms.com/english)).
2. The director of ECI ELP will contact you and set up a time to meet your family, view your home, and give a handbook. The host family should read the Host Family Handbook and sign the agreement at the end. The agreement can be faxed to 810-8714 or email to us..
3. ECI ELP will review students’ files that are coming to see if there is a match for your host family.
4. If there is a match, ECI ELP will contact the prospective host family to see if they are interested.

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*EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INTERACTIONS, INC.*

