



Seton Catholic Central  
International/Resident Program

Host Family and Resident Student  
Handbook

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## **I. Introduction**

### **Welcome**

Welcome to the International Student Program at Seton Catholic Central. In this handbook, there are both recommendations and requirements concerning the different aspects of hosting a student, which you will find to be a useful resource. Please refer to this handbook when you have a question and always feel free to contact the Director of International Students for clarification if necessary. It is important to remember that Seton Catholic's primary concern is our students.

### **Your Role as a Host Parent**

Looking ahead to the arrival of your International student, it is important to remember that he or she is coming to learn about living in a different country: its strengths and weaknesses, its language and customs, and its attitudes and beliefs. To a large extent, the impressions of America that your International student takes home will be formed through the relationship with your family. The reverse is also true. Your perceptions of a foreign culture will be influenced by your International student's attitudes and behavior.

The purpose of a home stay is not to convince a student that the United States is in any way better than his or her own country, nor is it to turn this person into an American. Rather, the ultimate goal is to develop mutual respect and understanding. It is a natural human tendency to feel that one's own customs, beliefs and values are the best. It is important to realize that difference doesn't always mean better or worse. Withholding value judgments will create an environment of mutual respect that will allow for greater understanding.

Host families and students should avoid stereotypes of different cultures to influence their behavior and communication. There are usually far more exceptions to a stereotype or generalization than examples supporting it. Try not to attach labels to your student. Instead, do your best to have an open mind. Avoiding prejudgment will increase your enjoyment of the time you spend with your student.

The home stay experience can bring endless new insights. It involves change, questioning, and sometimes frustration. Openness, sensitivity, and respect are necessary to ensure a valuable experience for you, your family, and your student.

### **Your New Family Member**

When your student meets you for the first time, he or she may be feeling rather insecure and shy. You will probably be feeling somewhat the same. Their silence may be due to fatigue and the struggle with an intense language barrier. Watch your new student and set the appropriate pace. A good sense of humor, warmth and understanding are very important. Both you and your student will need time to adjust to these new living arrangements. Be prepared to be flexible and accommodating. However, be careful not to give too much space, as allowing a student to hibernate in his/her room will severely disrupt a family closeness and could be detrimental to any progress that has been made. Contact the Director of International Students for advisement if this starts to become a problem.

## Culture Shock

### a. The Stages of Culture Shock

Your student will go through various stages of adjustment in progressing through the year. An awareness of these phases will help you and the members of your family understand why your student behaves in certain ways during the year and thus enables you to respond in a supportive manner.

**Phase I:** (September/October) At first, everything is interesting. Your student has just arrived and is the center of attention. Everything is new, intriguing and exciting. You will spend a lot of time trying to get to know your student and introduce him or her to your family and way of life, and everyone will be positive as you concentrate on similarities.

**Phase II:** (October/November) By Phase II however, the honeymoon is over. This is the stage in which culture shock happens. The student's focus shifts to differences, rather than similarities. Some of the symptoms observed in severe cases during this phase of culture shock are:

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Family tension and conflict
- Stereotyping of Americans
- Hostility towards Americans
- Loss of ability to work affectively
- Inexplicable fits of crying
- Physical ailments such as stomachaches and headaches

Most students will not experience severe culture shock. However, you may find your student sleeping a lot or staying in his or her room for hours at a time. Perhaps you may find that your "perfect" student has suddenly become irritable and defensive and won't do what you ask.

It is important to give your student space to adjust to this difficult stage that he or she is experiencing, but also continue to encourage family time. The more that the student isolates him or herself, the harder it will be for he or she to work his or her way out of this stage. Offer your student understanding and compassion, and contact the Director of International Students if you need assistance in dealing with your student.

**Phase III:** (December/January) As you reach this stage, your student is on the road to recovery. This is the stage in which your student begins to settle into routine and feel more comfortable in his or her new environment. What was once threatening and unknown has now become acceptable and familiar.

**Phase IV:** (February/March) By Phase IV, the student has completely adjusted to life in the United States. The student has learned to function in this new culture with confidence. Your

student may actually now enjoy and appreciate things he or she was highly critical of during Phase II. The student may not want to return home and may in fact experience “reverse culture shock.”

**Phase V:** (May/June) Your student may or may not reach Phase V, depending on the student and family environment in which you have created. If this phase does happen, it tends to start after spring break, during the final stretch of the year. All International Students begin to get a sense of “senioritis,” as they reach the final stretch before their return home. Some students may become unruly or less respectful during this stage, but this can be avoided if it is caught early on. On the other side of this phase, a student may also become so comfortable and happy within your home that he/she may request to live with you if they plan to return the following year.

### **American Customs**

It is important that you explain to your student that even though he or she may not be familiar with customs commonly practiced in the United States that he or she will need to adhere to them while here regardless of customs in the home country. Remember that this also applies to New York State laws, which may allow something at the age of 18 (i.e. purchasing tobacco products), which is prohibited through this program regardless of the student’s age.

#### **Tipping**

Students must understand that it is customary to leave monetary tips when using services in the United States. Tipping is a monetary form of gratitude for the service in addition to the amount due. Make sure your student understands that by not tipping, they are giving Plattsburgh merchants a bad perception about Seton Catholic International students, as well as foreign countries. Generally, the students should be following the guide below, and host families should be enforcing this:

Restaurants	15% of the total bill
Taxi cabs	\$2.00+
Airport Limo Services	\$5.00+

#### **Knocking Before Entering**

Students must be told that it is not polite to enter a room or home without knocking and waiting for approval prior to entering. Do not assume that your student already knows this.

#### **Asking Permission**

Students from around the world do not necessarily practice the policy of asking for permission from their parents before going somewhere or doing something. It does not mean that your student is rude; it is a custom difference that you need to explain and make sure your student understands. Host parents have the right to always know where the student is and whom they are with. A spreadsheet of all students and host parents will be provided for you to contact families before your student spends time with another student.

### **Orientation**

Students will receive a proper orientation during the first day of school amongst their peers to help with the overwhelming first day in a new school of a new country. American students who are leaders within the school (National Honor Society, Key Club, Student Council) will be carefully chosen as US Ambassadors and each will be paired up with a new/international student.

The American student (preferably same age/grade/gender) will help the new student throughout his/her first day by allowing the new student to shadow the US Ambassador to all of his/her classes throughout the entire day. This will allow for students to learn from an American student where things are without relying on the translation of fellow native speakers.

### **Seton Catholic School Rules**

Seton school rules and consequences are published annually in the Seton Catholic Student Handbook. This document is available online at <http://www.thesetonschools.org> and should be followed by the student. It is important that students realize that the English-only policy will be enforced at all times in the building and during school-related activities. Also, common questions such as dress code will be answered by accessing that handbook. Each student and parent is responsible for knowing the rules of Seton Catholic. Additionally, this website will provide current information throughout the school year, so it is important to keep checking the site for updates.

### **Host Family Homes**

International students and Resident students of Seton Catholic Central may only be housed in approved host homes. Host families must complete an extensive application process including a host home visit and personal interview. A criminal background investigation is performed on all applicants. There is no requirement that students must have their own bedroom, but they must have a bed to sleep on and a room where they can keep their belongings (even if it is a shared space with another student or biological child). Host homes should be clean and welcoming.

Generally, it is the policy of Seton Catholic to not host more than one student from the same country in any host home at the same time. Residing with another student from the same country tends to limit the English proficiency for each student in the home and is avoided whenever possible. In the case of a special circumstance, or in the case of availability however, exceptions can be made.

Upon arrival, show your student the entire house and where things are located, such as the bathrooms, closets, and appliances. Do not assume that, as you would with an American guest, that showing them the bathroom and the kitchen is enough. Since plumbing facilities and appliances vary around the world, it is important to show your student how everything is used—from the light switches and locks to the shower and toilet. Do not try to show your student everything at once, as it will be too overwhelming, and he or she may not retain everything that is important for them to know. Tell your student what is available for his or her use such as the telephone, computer, stereo, television, even soap and toothpaste. Make your student feel welcome to live comfortably in your home, as your own child would feel.

Most importantly, students must have access to any food in the kitchen. We take many things for granted in our homes, such as the accessibility of the family refrigerator. Many students complain of being hungry, when the real problem is a feeling of a reservation or embarrassment to take freely food from the refrigerator, pantry, or cupboards.

The Director of International Students reserves the right to visit any host home at any time, and may also visit the home during a school day with the student should the need arise.

### **The Student's Room**

It does not matter if a student has his or her own room, or shares a room with another student or another child in the family. What is important is that the student has his or her own space, but that they do not hibernate in that space for the duration of his or her stay. Generally, a student

who shares a room with someone who does not speak their native language has a more successful time learning English.

### **Privacy**

Explain your family customs on privacy. Let your student know you will always respect his or her privacy by knocking on their bedroom door before entering, and that you expect the same privacy in return. You might want to tell your student that it's all right if he or she needs to be alone for a while each day. Perhaps you do too. Assure the student that you will not pry into his or her belongings, phone conversations, or papers, and that you expect the student to do the same. However, the Director of International Student reserves the right to go through any student's personal belongings should the need arise.

### **Affection**

In establishing ties with your student, affection is an important factor. Your new family member may need, or be accustomed to receiving outward expressions of affection, such as an arm around the shoulder, a hug, a compliment or praise. Others may be offended or embarrassed by such outward expressions and will need a different kind of assurance of your support. Keep trying until you find an expression of affection that is right for everyone.

### **Family Schedule**

Give your student a reasonable typical daily schedule so that he or she knows when you usually go to bed, when you get up, when you eat meals, and how the schedule may differ on weekends. Discuss how your student will fit into your family's schedule.

A family dinner most evenings where the events of the day are discussed is the most appropriate way to encourage bonding and increase the comfort level among all in the household. Students who hold discussions with families at the dinner table each night statistically achieve higher grades in school as a result of his/her increased English proficiency.

### **Host Family Customs**

As you and your new family member become acquainted with one another, misunderstanding and miscommunication may result if you are not prepared for the adjustment. Remember that your student is not familiar with many American ideas and customs. You and your student have developed different concepts and behavior patterns based on different cultures and backgrounds. For instance, you will most likely differ noticeably in your table manners. Also, some students may have strong feelings of modesty if someone else washes his or her own private underclothes. These are cultural differences, and in most cases clarification and discussion are all that is necessary to resolve them.

Other differences may be subtler, such as your student's views of the proper roles of men and women in society. Your student's ideas may affect his or her willingness to do a particular chore, initial expectations, or responses in your family.

These differences need to be discussed openly between host parents and students as to what is acceptable in your home, versus what is "right" or "wrong." Such issues as frequency of baths and changing clothes need not be embarrassing topics if they are approached early and in terms of your family's customs. This may also include other childhood development issues such as female menstruation or other personal issues. The Director of International Students deals with these issues on a daily basis and is very comfortable discussing these issues with your student as a third party person.



Please contact the International Office for guidance and assistance with discussing all personal issues with your student and an appropriate meeting can be scheduled to assist with these issues.

A careful explanation of the rules you wish your student to follow and the reasons why they are important to you is best done at the very beginning. A few minutes of friendly, frank explanations may save everyone from later irritation and bewilderment. As time goes on, you may need to reevaluate your rules depending on the needs and maturity of the student. Your visitor may have been given more or less independence than you give your children. If your student comes from a more protected or controlled environment, he or she may need the security of being told what to do. On the other hand, they may be accustomed to coming and going without telling his or her parents his or her whereabouts.

You may want to follow whatever the norm is in your family or community regarding family rules. However, if you insist on knowing your student's plans, be sure to let your student know ahead of time. Rules and expectations of our International Students must be discussed as a family upon arrival. The sooner you explain these guidelines, the easier it will be for your student to understand what is and is not expected of them during their stay in the United States. ***Provide an atmosphere that allows for open communication, and be sure to sit down with your student within the first week of school to go through this handbook to make sure that everyone involved understands fully what the International Program expectations are at Seton Catholic Central.***

It is important to remember that any International Student studying at Seton Catholic Central, who has been accepted into your home, should be treated equally to that of your biological children. Therefore, it is expected that students will have full access to food without specific limitations and will participate in household chores and family events. Host parents should take students grocery shopping with them upon arrival to find out what sorts of food the student likes and dislikes. Students generally feel more welcomed and accepted when they are included in these decisions and given choices.

### **Host Family Rules**

Each student must obey host family regulations regarding curfew, dating, and household chores. The relationship between you and your International student will require lots of communication, understanding and patience. Above all, the Seton Catholic International Program has set forth rules that must be followed by the student and enforced by the host family. If the student is not following these rules, and the host family is not enforcing them, then the host family may be removed from the program and the student moved to another home.

### **Social Life**

Communication is the key. Students and host parents must discuss daily what their plans are for weekend and after school plans, as well as transportation needs. Make sure your student understands that you should be informed of his or her whereabouts at all times. Make it clear that if plans change, that you should be called. Make specific plans! For example, no student should ever be left to hang out at the mall all day. Local merchants do not appreciate loitering, and it gives Seton Catholic a poor reputation.

It is important to not assume that your student knows about the cultural appreciation that Americans have for advanced notice of upcoming events (i.e. last minute "Can you come get me right now?" phone calls). No matter where your student is from, he/she is a teenager and will not necessarily think of your best interest and the most respectful or convenient/ideal way to do something without your guidance. Establish rules for advanced warning and expect to repeat

them often, as you would with your own child. Make sure your student knows how to reach you and what your expectations are.

### **Chores**

As a member of your family, your International student should share equally in the pleasures and the duties of your home. Let your student know what you expect regarding his or her room, and be clear about those expectations. The student should be expected to help out with household chores such as cleaning the bathroom weekly, washing dishes, setting the table, or feeding the animals. You may want to write the chores down and post them. Childcare should not be asked of any International student, unless they are given the option to watch your children as a job for payment. (Please see section: VI: Cash Exchange) It is unacceptable to ask your International student to do anything more than what is asked of your own children.

### **Laundry**

What is your family routine regarding laundry? Show your student where to put dirty clothes. If you want your student to wash his or her own laundry, demonstrate the operation of the washing machine and dryer, and be sure to convey his or her responsibility to fold and put away clothes. It is important to respect the sensitivity of the student's privacy, and honor their requests if they do not wish for anyone to handle their personal clothing/undergarments.

### **Personal Hygiene**

Bathing customs differ around the world. Let your students know how important it is to bathe daily, and enforce it as a household custom, as opposed to a cultural one. Talk with your student freely about this issue early on and arrange daily routines that work for everyone in the household.

### **Study Time**

Most International students do not need guidance for studying, but it is still a good idea to set aside a certain time each day as study time. Ideally, the student should be alone and away from the stereo or television. Remember that study time must be early enough as to not interfere with the weeknight curfew of 10:00PM. In many countries students study late into the night, but explain that this is not acceptable in your home.

### **Smoking/Drinking/Drugs**

Smoking and drinking for minors is legal in many countries, but it is illegal in the United States. Anyone under the age of 21 may not consume alcoholic beverages, so it is irrelevant what previous customs students may have had prior to arrival into the United States. Students may only use drugs prescribed by a doctor. International students arrested for underage drinking or drug possession will face the same penalties as United States citizens, including mandatory fines, prison terms, or severe penalties. It is imperative that host parents enforce this rule, as students will be deported if found guilty for smoking, using drugs, or consuming alcoholic beverages, based on our dismissal steps as set forth by the Director of International Students and Seton Catholic Central (Please see section: XII: Dismissal Steps).

### **Sex/Public Displays of Affection (PDA)**

Seton Catholic Central is a Catholic school, which practices Catholic values. Abstinence, the voluntary self-denial of sexual activity, is a teaching of the church, and therefore an expectation of Seton Catholic Central. International students apply to Seton to receive an outstanding

education and cultural experience, and personal relationships tend to inhibit a student's success. Relationships are not forbidden, but sexual activity and PDA will not be permitted.

### **Curfew**

Enforcing a curfew for your student is in the best interest of both the student and host parent. Students who are overtired at school as a result of being up too late the night before will try to sleep in class or will not be successful academically. It also does not give the host parent or Seton Catholic a good reputation when one of their students is out past a reasonable hour. Exceptions will be made for school-related events (i.e. sports) or trips. All host parents must enforce the curfew below:

**School Nights        10:00PM**  
**Weekends/Holidays 11:00PM**

### **b. English-Only Policy**

The parents of our International students are spending a lot of money to send their child to the United States to learn English. Allowing your student to spend hours speaking their native language amongst friends is not only damaging the ultimate goal of this study-abroad opportunity, but it also makes it difficult for the student to succeed in school or make American friends. Explain to your student that Americans find it offensive when someone speaks another language around them, because they feel like the person is talking about them. If host parents do not enforce an English-only policy at home, you are not helping your student to get the most out of this experience. This also includes limiting the viewing of movies in a native language and the use of instant messaging in a native language; both of these methods of entertainment have been proven within the International Program at Seton Catholic to reduce a student's progress both academically and socially.

### **Local Hangouts**

Local merchants and facilities such as Champlain Centre North Mall, Wal-Mart, and the YMCA are not locations where International students should be hanging out. Wal-Mart and Champlain Centre North are shopping facilities. Students should only be there to shop, not to spend hours of time together. This disrupts our local society, and does not give the host parent or student a good reputation. The YMCA is a wonderful place for students to go after school to work out if they choose not to participate in sports, but that does not mean that it is a place for students to loiter until they can get a ride home. Additionally, the downtown (Margaret Street area) is a college student hang-out and therefore should be avoided after 5:00PM, for the safety of all Seton high school students. Plattsburgh is a small town; people are noticing you! If students want to spend time with their friends, they should gather at a private location, such as a host family's home after getting permission from the family. Host families may not use local facilities as after-school care.

### **Medical Issues**

#### **c. Health Insurance**

Each student is covered by health insurance during his or her stay in the United States, but policies differ from student to student. The insurance coverage for all students is an important element of security and peace of mind to students, natural parents and host families alike. Your student should receive all pertinent insurance information upon arrival at the Introductory Host Family Meeting, or soon thereafter. Students will receive an insurance ID card, which should be carried with them at all times. Each student's insurance coverage may be unique, depending on

the agency and policy that the agency carries. Private students, who do not have insurance, are covered by an insurance policy purchased for them by Seton Catholic Central. As you already know regarding your own health insurance policy, some co-pays and/or deductibles may apply.

Please contact the health insurance agency of your student upon his/her arrival to make yourself knowledgeable of the procedure that will need to be followed in the case of an emergency, so when you need the information, you have already obtained it and are therefore more informed and therefore prepared. It is particularly important for Host Parents to make sure that you know where your student's health insurance card is and to make sure that he/she pays the appropriate co-pay at the time of service whenever receiving medical attention on any sort.

Keep in mind that these international student insurance policies are not intended for well visits and physicals as they generally are for US students. If your student has an emergency, it will definitely be covered by all of the students' policies, however many insurance companies will not cover a routine maintenance exam or screening, as it is not perceived as necessary while the child is studying in the US for a short time. If your student wishes to have his/her teeth fixed for example, or some other optional health visit/procedure, you should encourage his/her to do that when visiting their native country for a vacation, or with a family member elsewhere in the United States.

#### **Private Student Coverage**

Private students are students who have attended Seton before, or who applied directly to Seton without the use of a student exchange agency. These students are covered through *ISM Insurance*, and information regarding this policy will be given to each student who falls under the Private Student category. It is important that host parents explain co-pays and deductibles to students, as many times these policies are sold without giving out that information. Details are provided to students along with their enrollment form. Private students will need to see the Director of International Students to assign a biological beneficiary in the case of accidental death. Students must complete claim forms available at <http://www.visit-aci.com/claimform.htm>. Claim form available for download at <http://isminc.com/insurance/international-student-accident>.

#### **Coverage for Students Studying Through Agencies**

Each agency uses their insurance agency of choice for International student health insurance coverage. Policy coverage varies with each agency, and some even require the students to prepay and then file a claim form for reimbursement. It is best just to get into the habit of calling ahead for approval before taking your student to a doctor. Agencies promise that they have informed their students of this, but with language barriers, students often do not understand this. Information regarding insurance coverage will be given to students upon arrival, and any questions should be directed to the Insurance Agent or Student Exchange Agent. It is important that host parents explain co-pays and deductibles to students, as many times these policies are sold without giving out that information.

### **Health Centers**

If your student needs to see a doctor, it is your responsibility to take the student to seek medical attention. Options of locations are listed below:

Plattsburgh Health Center - 675 Route 3, Plattsburgh, NY - 566-

0672 Beach Medical Services - 79 Hammond Lane, Plattsburgh, NY -

563-5900 CVPH ER - 75 Beekman St., Plattsburgh, NY - 562-7370

### **Immunizations**

In order to attend school in the United States, health records and immunizations must be current. Many countries do not require immunizations such as Hepatitis B, so it is important that these become current immediately after arrival into the United States. It is the host parents' responsibility to call the **Clinton County Health Services (565-4848)** to make an appointment for and bring their student(s) to an appointment immediately after arrival for any necessary immunizations. The New York State Department of Health will mandate that we expel and deport any student not in compliance. If you have any questions about your student's immunization requirements, please contact the school nurse at 561-4031, ext. 112. It is your responsibility to transport your student to a health care facility for a physical or immunizations as needed.

### **Sports Clearances**

If your student is interested in participating in sports at Seton Catholic, he or she must be cleared by the school nurse prior to beginning practices. Most clearances take place prior to when the International Students arrive, so it is important that students interested in playing sports contact the school nurse at 561-4031, ext. 112 immediately upon arrival.

## **IX. Financial Matters**

### **a. Host Family Financial Responsibility**

You are not expected to provide the student with spending money to cover incidental expenses, such as weekend entertainment, personal items, school supplies, clothing, or long-distance

telephone calls. You are expected to provide them with room, board, and transportation. This includes breakfast and dinners on school days, three meals a day on weekends or when school is closed, and transportation to and from school/school-related activities, and the airport. This does include to sporting events or sport practices, as well as to any form of healthcare as necessary. Host families should be providing basic toiletries such as toothpaste, toilet paper, soap, and shampoo without question. If the student chooses specialty products, then he/she can purchase those at his/her own expense.

#### **b. Cash Exchange**

The International Director must approve any money exchanged between host family and student. This includes collection of funds for cell phones, DSL or cable connections, and reimbursement for credit card use. It is difficult sometimes for students to make flight arrangements without a credit card, or to purchase a cellular phone without a social security number, and often host parents have generously offered to do this for their students and have the students pay them back in cash. *This arrangement is allowed only if it has been approved by the Director of International students prior to the purchase.* Copies of invoices must be available upon request.

#### **c. Monthly Stipends**

Host families receive a monthly stipend in the amount of \$700/student for room, board and transportation of the student. Stipends will be distributed at the end of each month throughout the academic school year. Stipends will begin the last week in September, with the final deposit made during the last day of June. In the case of a student being moved from one host home to another, the host family stipend will be prorated. Do not contact the Business Office about obtaining money earlier.

Canadian International students must obtain permission by the Director of International Students to go home during weekends of each month. Upon this agreement, that student's Host Family will receive a pro-rated stipend.

If you are taking another International student from another host family for a week or more for vacation or home-stay for the family, upon agreement between you and that host family, then a weekly stipend, upon approval from the Director of International Students, may be provided to you from the monthly stipend of the host family who's student you are taking care of. If you have questions in regards to this topic please ask the Director of International Students before you make definitive plans.

If a student leaves the country for at least one month or more, the host family's stipend will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director of the International Students and the Principal. In some cases the stipend will be prorated and in other cases there will be no stipend given for that month.

#### **d. Christmas/Birthdays**

No additional funds will be given to host families for Christmas or birthdays. It is our assumption that host parents will give students a gift for Christmas and his or her birthday out of the goodness of their hearts, as this student is truly a member of the family and in America it is customary to show members of our family that we care about them by giving them gifts on these two days each year. Sometimes, host parents contact the student's biological parents and the biological parents send the host parents money to buy the students gifts, but that depends on the family and should not be requested or assumed. It is also customary in the United States to celebrate a child's birthday by way of a family gathering or party, so host parents generally provide this type of event for their student on his/her birthday.

### **e. Checking Accounts**

Some students arrive at Seton Catholic with a lot of cash. This presents an unsafe situation, so encouraging your student to open a checking account is a smart choice. This allows students to pay for things locally, and parents can make wire transfers directly into their son's or daughter's account. If you need information regarding the location of and services provided by local banks, please contact Seton's Director of International Students.

## **X. Social Activities**

### **YMCA**

The YMCA is a great place for students to go after school if they are interested in working out, but not necessarily in playing a sport or joining a club. The Director of Membership at the local Plattsburgh YMCA is available to speak with any student who is interested in obtaining membership to the Y (518-561-4290). All Seton rules and expectations (such as no smoking) will be enforced at the YMCA and the Director of International Students will be contacted should there be any behavioral problems.

### **Monthly Activities/Excursions**

It is important that your student receive more than an academic experience while at Seton Catholic. Each year the Director of International Students plans activities and excursions in order to give each student the full cultural experience of Northern New York. This helps students greatly by introducing them to surrounding areas and giving them an opportunity to spend time with friends in a non-academic environment. Whenever possible, we will travel via charter coach for the utmost comfort and safety, however this will be dependent on the number of students and the budget allotted for this. Otherwise, expect standard school bus transportation. Host families will be responsible to transport students to and from the departure and arrival location (usually Seton Catholic parking lot), or to any local event/site.

Seton Catholic has mandated a nominal activity fee for each International student. Many times, students may be interested in participating, but may be unable to afford the extra cash at the last minute. By requiring this fee to be paid up front, students have that expense provided up front allowing them to participate. A calendar of tentative events will be given to host parents and students at the beginning of each year. As dates approach confirmed events will be made and communicated to students and host families. Planned events are always subject to change, and many winter-related activities and trips are scheduled weather permitting. Students may sometimes choose not to participate, but host parents should encourage involvement as much as possible. Also, on occasion, sporting events or college testing may conflict with scheduled events, which is out of the control of the International Program. Unfortunately, this activity fee is not itemized and therefore cannot be refunded in any of these situations.

Some trips (such as ski trips) will still require students to pay for ski/snowboard rentals in addition to lift tickets if transportation is being paid for as part of the activity fee. Students will be made aware of these details on permission slips.

It is sometimes questioned whether a student may go to the annual Junior Prom. A student may attend if he/she is: a. a Junior b. invited by a Junior c. only at Seton Catholic for one year

### **Permission Slips**

Prior to each trip, students will be asked to sign up in the International Office if they plan to attend the excursion or activity. This is necessary in order for Seton to reserve enough tickets or space for each student. Announcements will be made at the end of the day in school with general information. Students will then need to have their host parent sign a permission slip illustrating that you are aware of your student's plans, and that you will need to arrange for transportation to and from the event. It is important that host parents read these permission slips very carefully to make sure that they understand what is required of them and/or the students for each event/excursion, particularly any payment required and departure/arrival dates and times. It is never wise to sign anything that is not clearly understood, so please read it carefully before signing each one.

### **Chaperoning**

Chaperones are necessary for any excursion to be successful and all chaperones will have VIRTUS training. Generally, a 1:6 chaperone/student ratio is a comfortable arrangement. The Director of International Students will ask faculty and parents to volunteer to chaperone these events. Admission and transportation will be paid whenever possible, for any adult willing to volunteer his or her time. Chaperones must be active in promoting group participation and will be responsible for his or her students for the duration of the trip. Chaperones who do not fulfill the necessary requirements of adult supervision will not be asked to chaperone again. Unfortunately, biological children of chaperones (who do not attend Seton Catholic) cannot accompany chaperones on any Seton trip, due to liability issues.

### **Annual 4-Day Weekend Trip**

Each year the Director of International Students will coordinate an intense 3-day excursion to one of the United States' most popular cities. Students will be advised as to the location of this annual trip several months in advance. Each student has prepaid for this trip, so they will only be responsible for meals and spending money. Students who miss any days of school while on this trip, will be responsible for making up any missed work. We will have a security guard in the hotel hallways throughout each night. There will be less than a 1:5 ratio of adults to students

chaperoning this trip and priority will be given to Seton faculty or approved returning chaperones, with any unused spaces open to willing parents. Please note that the pre-departure meeting one week in advance is mandatory for all students and parents. The day and time be posted well in advance of this meeting.

## **XI. Transportation**

### **Host Family Requirements**

Host Family requirements for transportation are very specific: Students must always have a ride to and from school or any school-related activity or event. You must provide transportation yourself, or arrange to have someone else drive your student if you are unavailable. If your student arrives at school in a taxi, you will be notified. *If it happens three times, your student will be removed from your home.* You are required to transport your student from the airport upon arrival, return them to the airport upon departure, and provide reasonable airport transportation if the student chooses to fly somewhere during the Christmas holiday. If your student chooses to practice any faith of their choice, it is your responsibility to transport them to and from the place of worship of their choice, and to transport your student for any medical attention they may require. You will need to provide transportation to places such as Wal-Mart for your student to purchase school supplies or toiletries as needed. You are asked to provide a reasonable amount of transportation on weekends and holidays to social activities such as the mall. However, students are permitted to take taxis to supplement his/her transportation requests.





You are not required to provide transportation to college placement testing (TOEFL, ACT, or SAT exams) within reason. Many of our students come from metropolitan areas where they are accustomed to the convenience of mass transit. Since Plattsburgh, NY does not have a metro system for quick and cheap transportation, students may use taxis to get to and from these events. Carpooling is also recommended and has been a proven method of transportation of former host parents.

### **School Buses**

Host parents who live in the Peru, Saranac, Beekmantown, Chazy, or AuSable Valley public school districts, have the ability to allow their student to ride a school bus to Seton Catholic Central each day that the public school buses are operating. In order for your student to ride a school bus, you must complete a **Transportation Request Form** available on our website. You must complete the form, call the appropriate bus garage, and give the form to the bus garage prior to the start of school each year. Please remember that the public schools do not always operate on the same school calendar as Seton Catholic, so if the school bus is not available, you are responsible for providing alternate transportation.

Au Sable Valley CSD Bus Garage	518-834-2851
Beekmantown CSD Transportation	518-563-8257
Chazy Central Bus Garage	518-846-7250
Peru CSD Bus Garage	518-643-6060
Saranac CSD Bus Garage	518-565-5630

### **C.A.R.T. Buses**

Plattsburgh's only form of public transportation is the city bus system commonly referred to as the C.A.R.T. Bus. This city bus charges a nominal reduced fee for Seton Catholic Students, and the bus stops right in front of Seton Catholic. Students are permitted to ride the C.A.R.T. bus to and from school as well as to local areas (i.e. the mall or YMCA). Host parents should contact the bus station for more information as to bus stops, schedules, and fares.

C.A.R.T. 518-561-1452

### **Taxi Cabs**

Students are permitted to ride taxicabs as a mode of public transportation to and from social activities, but must never ride a taxi to get to school (Please see Section XI: Host Family Requirements). Students must remember if they ride taxicabs that it is customary to tip the driver (Please see Section II: Culture Shock).

### **Driving**

International students are not allowed to drive a vehicle. The exception is unless the student is traveling back and forth to their home in Canada for the weekends with the permission of both biological parents and the Director of International Students. If this is the case he/she are under no circumstances allowed to drive any other students in their vehicle while here in the United States.



## **Technology**

Make sure that the student understands what the volume and time limits are regarding the television, telephone, and computer. Particularly with the Internet, it is nearly impossible to do research without the use of the World Wide Web, yet as parents you also know how dangerous the internet can be to our youth if their access is not monitored properly.

### **Telephone/Phone Cards**

Your telephone is a part of your home. As a host parent, you have the right to establish your own phone rules respecting your family and your property. Make sure that you explain to your student what you allow when it comes to phone calls and telephone time. **DO NOT ALLOW LONG DISTANCE PHONE CALLS.** Take your student to SAMS Club, Wal-Mart or a local grocery store and have them purchase phone cards with International minutes. The International Office cannot collect payment for phone calls made in your home, so it is important that you do not put yourself in jeopardy of being left with an unpaid phone bill.

### **Computers/Laptops**

As a host family, you are required to have a home computer with basic Internet hook-up available for your student to use to communicate with his or her family, as well as to complete homework assignments. Some students choose to bring their own laptop computers with them, which are also fine, as long as the host parent enforces the rules regarding Internet and curfews. If you do not have a working computer, you must have one by the first official day of school, as school information is now only available online and therefore must be accessible to your student. Any host parent found guilty of asking a student to purchase a computer will be subject to removal from the program.

It is also assumed that host families will be internet savvy enough to correspond with Seton Catholic and biological families abroad on a regular basis via email. Some of the most important information from the Director of International Students and the Principal of Seton Catholic will come through email for fast communication.

### **Internet Policy**

Internet connection options vary from free basic telephone connections to high-speed wireless cable/DSL connections. Host families are only required to offer the most basic Internet option, but **MUST** offer some sort of internet connection in his/her home. If your student is interested in paying the difference to upgrade your Internet service to high-speed cable or DSL, they are welcome to do so, but the student must realize that rules regarding curfews will still apply. Additionally, each host family **MUST** provide Seton Catholic with a current e-mail address for frequent contact as important student information is e-mailed often.

Host Families should limit Internet accessibility to a reasonable amount time (approximately 2-3 hours per day). This is ample time for your student to e-mail their friends and family, or do any necessary research for a homework assignment. Students may not be allowed to hibernate in their rooms with their laptops for hours each day watching foreign films or chatting online.

International students who chat or watch foreign films online are spending too much time speaking (typing) their native language, which inhibits their ability to learn English. Also, due to time zone differences, students feel the need to stay up all hours of the night to chat online with friends and family abroad, and then have difficulty getting up for school the next day, or staying awake in class.



In order for host families to actually reduce Internet access, you are required to turn off routers, or unplug modems or DSL connections and remove the wire necessary for connection at the mandatory curfew times of 9PM on weekdays and 11PM on weekends, as set by Seton Catholic (Please see section: IV: Host Family Rules).

Failure to comply with this Internet Policy will result in having your student removed from your home, as you are not establishing the best environment for your student.

### **Cell Phones**

Many students will come to the United States with his or her own cellular phone, but will find upon arrival that our cell towers/networks are not compatible with his or her own phone. Many host families set up for their student to have their own cell phone plan, and have no problem collecting money monthly to pay these bills. Should you choose to offer this option to your student, remember that the Director of International Students must first approve this and be provided with copies of the bills upon request (Please see section: IX: Financial Matters), but please note that this option is not required of any Host Family. It is highly recommended that the biological family of each student purchase any cellular phone that your student wishes to use.

Please let your students know that the main purposes of cell phones are to communicate between themselves and their Host Family, Chaperone, or any School Officials not to be social amongst friends. Cell phones may be limited to communications amongst the aforementioned persons by Host Families and/or the Director of International Students if this becomes a problem.

## **Exams**

### **SLEP**

The Secondary Language English Proficiency exam is given to students prior to studying in the United States. It is also administered by the English Department at Seton Catholic when necessary to place students in the correct level English courses.

### **TOEFL**

The Test of English as a Foreign Language is an International exam that is administered at various locations around the world, and it is required for admission to many universities in the United States. There is a TOEFL testing site in Plattsburgh, NY. Students, using a credit card, must schedule online to take a TOEFL exam and they are responsible for the transportation to and from the exam. [For more information visit: http://www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl)

### **c. SAT**

Scholastic Assessment Tests are required for admission to almost all universities in the United States. The SAT is offered at Plattsburgh State University and Plattsburgh High School at various times throughout the school year. Again, the student is responsible for the cost and transportation to take this exam. Your student may get more information in the Student Services/Counseling Office at Seton Catholic if he or she is interested in taking the SAT.

## **XIV: Acceptance Policy**

Seton Catholic Central strives for academic excellence and therefore we have established a strict acceptance policy as guidelines for applicants applying to join our International Student/Resident Student Program. Special considerations may be made for extraordinary circumstances.

### **Academic Requirements**

A minimum of a C average, a minimum SLEP (Secondary Language English Proficiency) score of 45, and a minimum of 3 years of English (ELA) courses are required of all applicants.

### **Transfer Student from another US School**

Students transferring to Seton from another school in the United States will have special consideration due to additional English language experience.

### **Additional Requirements**

Students are required to complete a comprehensive International Student Application including but not limited to:

- 1 Letter of Recommendation
- 1 Letter of Introduction to the Host Family
- 1 Letter of Intention (Essay on why you want to attend Seton)
- 1 Photo page with several personal photos
- Medical records
- Immunization records
- Official transcripts with official seals, no exceptions!

## **XIV: Academic Credit**

### **New York State Regents Exams**

Seton Catholic is accredited by the New York State Department of Education. Therefore, as a school, we are mandated by the state to follow certain curriculum guidelines, including the New York State Regents courses and exams. Regents exams are final exams issued by the state without any faculty knowing prior to testing day what questions will be asked. Your student will not understand Regents, and you will need to help them to understand the importance of studying for these difficult tests. Students should direct any specific course or testing questions to the appropriate member of the Seton faculty.

### **Convalidation**

Countries such as Mexico, Spain, Brazil, and Dominican Republic require a course validation known as Convalidation. This requires the Director of International Students to submit final transcripts for approval by the Department of State. These documents need to be notarized by a Notary Public, verified by the Country Clerk, and legalized by the Secretary of State, in which case an apostille is attached prior to submission to the Spanish Ministry for the student to receive credit for studying in the United States within his or her respective countries. Only students in grades 9-12 are eligible for convalidation according to the guidelines as set by the Spanish Ministry. If your student comes from one of these countries, it is his or her responsibility to speak with the Director of International Students about convalidation requirements. Seton Catholic course schedules will be made accordingly.

## **Graduation Requirements**

In order for International Students to earn a New York State Diploma, he or she must fulfill all of the requirements set by the New York State Education Department. Seton Catholic will give transfer credits to students transferring to Seton whenever possible, but official transcripts will need to be provided in order to do so. Students will need to complete 22.5 credits and successfully complete all Regents requirements in order to graduate from Seton Catholic. If your student is interested in obtaining a diploma from Seton, he or she must understand that it will take an absolute minimum of two (2) to three (3) full years, with additional years depending on the student's English proficiency upon arrival. There is a list of specific Graduation Requirements available in the International Office upon request. These Graduation Requirements are not negotiable as they are mandated by the State of New York.

### **d. College**

International Students who are graduating seniors have the ability to apply to universities in the United States for freshman admission. Seniors begin applying to colleges soon after the beginning of the year. If your student is interested in applying to college, they must complete their applications online, and get them in as soon as possible. Seton's School Counselor and the Director of International Students are both available to help students with college applications in the Student Services/Counseling Office. Students should sign up to meet during a free period, and attend evening informational meetings as scheduled. The Director of International Students will also assist international students with college admissions and I-20 visa transfers as needed.

## **XV. Dismissal Policy**

Seton Catholic reserves the right to dismiss a student at any time for lack of English proficiency, academic insufficiencies, lack of cooperation in the host home environment, or for any behavioral reasons. Students are expected to follow the rules of Seton Catholic Central at all times and to achieve high academic standards. Any student not showing a constant improvement is subject to dismissal.

### **Student Dismissal**

The Director of International Students will complete a Student Report Form for any student who is found guilty of not following rules and regulations set by Seton Catholic. International Students will follow the same disciplinary steps as set forth in the Seton Catholic Student Handbook, but the student will be deported to his or her native country instead of being suspended from school. Students found guilty of smoking, drinking, drugs, sex, or any illegal crime may be deported immediately without warning.

### **Host Family Dismissal**

Host families are the most important part of the International Student Program, as you are the student's comfort zone, his or her security, and place to call home. In order for Seton Catholic to offer our International students the best that we can, it is important that host families continue to meet the International Department standards. Any host parent found to not be in compliance with this Host Parent Handbook will have their International Student removed from his/her home. The Director of International Students reserves the right to remove students at any time for any reason.



## **XVI. Travel**

### **a. Independent Travel**

Students are permitted to travel both internationally and domestically throughout their year at Seton Catholic after obtaining permission from the Director of International Students. Students must only travel during Seton Catholic vacations, and must be visiting a relative age 25 or older. If your student is interested in traveling, he or she must pick up a Student Travel Form from the International Office and complete it two weeks prior to his or her departure. The form will need to be signed by host parents, and faculty, as well as have their natural parents e-mail or fax the Director of International Students written consent for the travel plans. A Student Travel Form must be completed for each and every trip taken by your student, even if it is always to the same location.

### **b. Host Family Travel**

Often host families will take their International son or daughter with them to visit family or friends, or to vacation to places such as Florida during Spring Break. Students traveling with host parents do not need parental permission, but still must complete the Travel Form, so that the Director of International Students knows where the student will be and what the host family plans are. If you need to travel without your International student, you must make arrangements for your student to stay with another host family, family, or friend. In some cases, the Director of International Students may make a home visit to that family or person's home to ensure safety and comfort of both the student and the members of the temporary household, please inform the family you intend your student to stay with of this possibility. The Director of International Students must always be informed of your travel plans. If you need assistance in finding a home for your student while you will be away, Seton's Director of International Students will assist you with this. *The most important thing to remember is that your student must NEVER be left home alone overnight.*

If you plan on going on vacations or outings with your family and are bringing along an International student(s) you are expected to pay for the cost of the trip for your student. It is your choice if you wish to come up with a plan to split costs with your student. Never expect that the International student should pay for something that you or your family scheduled without the consent or prior opinion of your student.

### **c. Student Travel Forms**

The Student Travel Form is available in the International Office and must be completed by any International student who wishes to travel. Your student must see the Director of International Students to obtain this form, and you will be responsible for helping the student to complete the form correctly.

## **XVII. Miscellaneous**

### **Important Documents**

Your student will have in their possession an original I-20, a passport, an I-94 VISA, and possibly even return airline tickets upon his or her arrival. Seton Catholic asks that the host family hold these documents for the student in a location where they will not be damaged or misplaced, such as a fireproof box or safe deposit box that is easily accessible. The student should always carry a copy of his or her passport in a wallet, the pocket Information Card provided by Seton Catholic, and his or her Insurance ID card.

### **Host Family Spreadsheet**

A current Host Family Spreadsheet will be provided to all host parents as often as possible as a reference for Host Family information. You will find this to be extremely useful in arranging car pools or for meeting other host parents. The International Office will release an updated version at the beginning of each semester for your convenience. This spreadsheet is always changing, but the most current copy will be available at the Orientation Meeting.

### **XVIII. Changing Host Homes**

If a host family change needs to be made, it does not necessarily mean that you have a bad student, or that you are a bad host family. Sometimes people are just not compatible and personality conflicts may make living together difficult. The Director of International Students may need to relocate students in an attempt to find a better match. A meeting in the Student Services/Counseling Office will be called for any student or host family who is having compatibility issues, in an attempt to resolve the problem without making any drastic housing changes. If a conflict or issue cannot be resolved, than an amicable host home move will be scheduled.

The Director of International Students reserves the right to remove any student without following this multiple step procedure at any time.

**XIX. Host Family Agreement**

**Host Family Agreement**

I have read this handbook in its entirety and will adhere to all guidelines from within. I understand that as a host parent as part of the Seton Catholic International Program I am expected to support the mission of Seton Catholic and the policies, procedures, and expectations as set by the Director of Student Services/International Students.

*Please sign and date below, indicating that you have read this handbook and that you will both follow and enforce the policies mandated by the International Department at Seton*

*Catholic:*

Host Parent’s Name \_\_\_\_\_ Host Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Host Parent’s Name \_\_\_\_\_ Host Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read this handbook and understand the guidelines that I will be expected to follow during my stay in the United States. Please sign and date below, indicating that you have read this handbook, and that your host parent(s) have explained everything to you, because not understanding these guidelines will not be an acceptable excuse:*

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This signed page must be returned to the Student Services Office by**

**Friday, September 15, 2017**

**Stipends will not be deposited and any student in your home will be relocated if this form is not returned by the date listed above.**

**Thank you for understanding the importance and urgency.**