

The Hong Kong Baptist University
Office of Student Affairs, Counselling and Development Centre
Host Family Programme

Reference Material for Host Families



Use of Messaging APPs

Thanks for the technology nowadays, we can contact with each other anytime and anywhere through various messaging APPs, such as WhatsApp, WeChat, Line, etc.

Amid the pandemic in 2020, the Counselling and Development Centre will setup a messaging group for host families to meet students online. Through the messaging group, host families can exchange with students, support the students, share with them about the situation in Hong Kong and prepare them for their arrival in the coming future.

How to start the conversation with the students?

To start the conversation with the students, host families can try to learn more about students' life and interests. For example,

- Which TV series are popular in your hometown recently?
- Which YouTube Channel is popular among your friends? Do you like that Channel?
- Which kind of music do you like?
- How was the first week of classes? How do you feel about it?
- Where would you like to go sightseeing in Hong Kong?

Host families can also consider making good use of the voice and video chat functions of messaging APPs.



How to maintain the relationship with students?

Before students' arrival...

Host families can take initiatives in showing care and support to students by understanding how students' life and study are going. Besides, host families can provide latest information about Hong Kong and share their own daily life with the students. Firsthand information about Hong Kong from host families can help students to prepare for their life in Hong Kong. Host families' sharing on their own daily life can help students to understand the local life. These actions can deepen mutual understanding and foster relationship.



After arriving at HK...

Showing Support and Concern

There are many ways in which host families can express their support and care for students. Examples are:

- Students may feel homesick when they have just arrived at Hong Kong and started to live independently. It is a good opportunity for the host families to connect with the students and take the initiative in showing their concern about how they are adjusting to the new environment in Hong Kong. Host families may encourage the students to share their experience and difficulties.
- Host families may encourage students to participate in different activities, try new things and be open to make new friends.
- It would mean a lot to the students if their host families remember their birthday and celebrate with them.
- Students usually miss their parents more when they do not feel well. At these times, they may need more attention and care from host families.
- Besides caring for the students, host families may also send regards to the parents of the students when they return home for long vacations.

Sharing Life Experiences

Host families can arrange different types of activities to share their life experiences with the students. For example:

- Host families are suggested to gather with their students during festivals. Students will understand the local customs more by celebrating together. On the other hand, students are encouraged to share their ways of celebrating their local festivals to introduce their culture to the host families.

- Students are usually eager to integrate into Hong Kong society as soon as possible. Host families may help students to settle in Hong Kong by providing them with opportunities to practice Cantonese or English, learning everyday expressions and etiquette, as well as experiencing the cultural activities of Hong Kong.

Introducing Channels to Acquire Information

Students are not familiar with ways to acquire useful information when they first arrived at Hong Kong. Families may introduce resources available to them, such as:



- Regarding the purchase of daily necessities, host families may provide students with the information on shop locations, reputation, quality, word of mouth, etc.
- In regard to expanding community contacts, host families may provide students with information on transportation, government services, community resources, etc.
- Families may encourage students to get involved in various cultural activities such as entertainment, exhibitions and seminars, and introduce ways to look for related information.

Assisting in Problem-solving

Students may encounter difficulties in their daily life, such as problems with handling household work. With host families' guidance and encouragement, it is easier for students to adapt to their new life.

Students may consult their host family when they encounter urgent or important issues. This is a sign of their trust in the host family. The host family may help by offering assistance accordingly and encouraging students to contact the Counselling and Development Centre for support when needed.

Supplementary information

1. Students have different experiences and values as they are raised in different families. They may have viewpoints that are different from that of the host family on certain matters. It may be helpful to encourage students to express their opinions first and facilitate the exchange of ideas.

2. The financial conditions of students vary. Host families may consider showing hospitality through a number of ways, such as having fast food occasionally, inviting students to dine at host families' home, or involving students in activity preparation and planning. By doing so, host families and students will have more opportunities to connect, and it is easier for students to blend in with local families too.
3. Non-local students may have different understanding and experience in religions of Hong Kong people. Host families can try to be open-minded, to understand the students from their perspective when discussing religious topics. Host families should be sensitive to students' opinions and feelings towards these activities, and show respect to and acceptance of their decision.
4. Students may not be available to join the activities arranged by host families when they are busy with their studies. Under such circumstances, host families may consider having gatherings which are relatively less time-consuming, such as dining on campus or at the hall canteen.
5. Most of them will spend their vacation at home during a long holiday or semester break. If students choose to stay in Hong Kong during the break, they might feel even lonelier. Families may try to contact them more often

Other Special Concerns

1. **Q: My student mentioned that he does not have any friends in Hong Kong. He feels lonely and misses his parents a lot. What could I do?**

A: Sometimes students would feel homesick, lonely and worried when they first came to Hong Kong. These are normal reactions to a new environment. The host family could **encourage students to build up social network with their peers**, show concern about how they are feeling and experiencing, and give them hope that things would be different when they settle down.



2. Q: My student is very worried as she has failed a course in the mid-term examination. She could not sleep well for 1 week already. How could I help her?

A: Some students might experience overwhelming stress which usually associates with difficulties in coping with adjustment, lack of study skills, problems with interpersonal relationship, confusion in values and identity etc. They sometimes feel depressed, frustrated and anxious. Support and encouragement from the host family will definitely be helpful. However, if you notice that their depressed mood seems to **last for more than 2 weeks** and has not shown any improvement, or that they remain confused and anxious to an extent that their normal functioning is being affected (e.g. not sleeping well, complaining about physical discomfort such as headache, isolating from friends, absent from classes, etc.), you might **encourage them to talk to a counsellor at the Counselling and Development Centre**. Counseling sessions are confidential and free of charge.

3. Q: My student broke up with his girlfriend recently. He said that he did not want to study and he has been consuming a lot of alcohol to soothe his pain. What could I do?

A: If students exhibit any behaviors that are of concern to you (e.g. missing for days, expressing suicidal thoughts, reporting hallucinations, or other incidents that seem strange and unreal, etc.) but refuse to approach a counsellor, **it would be helpful if the host family could inform the Counselling and Development Centre**. In fact, host families are most welcome to contact us directly if there are any situations of concern. Please feel free to **contact our Assistant Mainland Student Services Officer, Mr. Zac Cheung, at 3411-2280**. He will connect you with appropriate personnel as needed.