

AYA Student Code of Conduct and Program Rules



The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to establish a consistent set of expectations for student behavior on the AYA program. AYA's primary objective is to ensure that each of our participants has a safe and rewarding experience wherein the rights and dignity of all individuals are valued and respected. The standards and values set forth in the Student Code of Conduct are the foundation of AYA's disciplinary process and program rules. As a participant on the AYA program you are a reflection of our goals and values, and AYA expects you to represent the program well and behave in a way that honors the integrity of the program and our mission to bring the world together. If your behavior or attitude is determined to undermine the AYA mission or the Code of Conduct and Rules, your participation on the AYA program could be terminated prematurely.

AYA is dedicated to helping you succeed and enjoy a safe and rewarding experience. As such, we have outlined the standards of conduct that we expect all of our participants to uphold, and included examples of behaviors that are not acceptable. Please review this information carefully so that you are aware of AYA's expectations and prepared for an exciting and successful year ahead!

Standards of Personal Integrity and Honesty

AYA students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that positively reflects the AYA program, their home countries and most importantly, themselves. This means being truthful, ethical and accountable for your behavior, action and intentions. Your ability to be honest, respectful and thoughtful to your friends, family and the community around you is a reflection of your character and will help you build trust and goodwill during your program. Below are a few examples of behaviors that violate AYA's standards of personal integrity and honesty:

Misrepresenting personal circumstances or deliberately issuing false statements, in order to change host families or obtain any outcome that is favorable to the student is considered a serious infraction of the Student Code of Conduct. Student safety is paramount to AYA and the program encourages students to report any and all circumstances that have the potential to compromise a student's health, safety or overall wellbeing. AYA takes any allegations of impropriety, misconduct or unsuitable housing arrangements seriously and will take swift and appropriate action to ensure that the student is safe, and investigate the claims accordingly. Students must be aware that issuing false claims or statements about any person or circumstance associated with the placement has the potential to permanently damage the reputation of an individual, family or community and is considered a serious breach of ethics. If a student is found to have deliberately issued any false statements or deliberately misrepresented their circumstances for any reason, he or she will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification.

Intentionally furnishing, misrepresenting or omitting information on the student application. AYA student applications must be completed accurately and honestly in order for AYA program staff to make an informed decision about a student's eligibility to participate on the program.

Academic Dishonesty is defined as any academic act of deception that is intentionally done to gain an unfair advantage for the student or another individual. This includes, but is not limited to giving or receiving assistance in an academic assignment/exam; plagiarizing or paraphrasing without appropriate citation and intentionally taking credit for the work of others.

Standards of Respect and Kindness

All students are expected to show respect and kindness to others, particularly their host family members, AYA Representatives, teachers and figures of authority. Using polite language, speaking calmly and addressing individuals kindly and with consideration to their feelings. Students are entitled to the same respect and kindness from others. Except in cases where safety is an imminent risk, students are also expected to follow AYA's communication chain when reporting a concern. The following are examples of behaviors that undermine standards of respect and kindness:

Shouting, screaming, or using a hostile tone or expletives towards any member of your host family, Local Coordinator or individual in a position of authority. Students must resolve conflict in a manner that is culturally appropriate and respectful. AYA has a comprehensive process in place to resolve any issues and will help students address and resolve issues in a constructive manner.

Speaking negatively or sharing personal and potentially damaging information about your host family or Local Coordinator. Barring situations of imminent danger, students should be respectful and discreet regarding their host family's personal affairs. This includes conversations, texts, messages or social media posts or exchanges that could be potentially hurtful or damaging. Host families open their hearts and homes to students with the understanding that students will respect their privacy and be considerate of their reputation with their community and/or school, even when conflicts arise. Any issues should be discussed with your LC or the AYA support team only.

Bullying: Bullying is defined as unwanted, hostile, or aggressive behavior among children and teenagers that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. Bullying actions can occur on or off school grounds, in person, or digitally via text, internet or social media. AYA will not tolerate bullying of any kind, and any indication that a student is involved with bullying another individual will result in immediate disciplinary action up to and including disqualification. AYA students should also let their host family, Local Coordinator or AYA know if they have been or are currently being bullied on program. Bullying actions include but are not limited to:

- a. Making threats or disparaging comments
- b. Spreading rumors
- c. Assaulting someone physically or verbally
- d. Intentionally excluding an individual from a group

Standards of Safety and Dignity

AYA's believes that all participants are entitled to have their experience in a nurturing environment where the rights, safety, health and dignity of all individuals are respected. As such we expect students to use sound judgement and always consider how their behaviors, decisions, actions and words could impact their own physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing, as well as the physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing of others. **Students should also conduct themselves in a manner that preserves and protects their own dignity and the dignity of others when engaging in behavior or dialogue that could negatively affect how they or someone else is viewed among friends, family, peers and community members.** Below are a few examples of behaviors that violate AYA's standards of safety and dignity.

Intentionally or recklessly endangering the student's own health, safety or welfare or that of any individual. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- a. Possession of any object classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, firearms, bludgeon weapons, brass knuckles, explosives, etc.).
- b. Operating a motor vehicle without a license or outside of AYA program rules.
- c. Driving with a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- d. Driving with a person who is showing irresponsible behavior (i.e. cell phone use, texting, speeding, racing, etc.).
- e. Consuming and/or sharing drugs, alcohol or tobacco, including abuse of over the counter drugs drugs/supplements and prescription drugs being used for recreational purposes
- f. Possession of drugs or alcohol, or tobacco and/or related paraphernalia (any equipment, product or item intended or designed for the use, including growing, harvesting, packaging, testing, storing, concealing or ingesting drugs alcohol or tobacco).

Disorderly Conduct: Any behavior that is intended to be disruptive, threatening, lewd or indecent. This includes the intentional or reckless destruction or damage of personal property (i.e. vandalism, tire slashing, damaging pranks).

Demonstrating a lack of sound judgment and maturity by engaging in behavior that could compromise the student's own safety and wellbeing. For example:

- a. Getting into a car with a stranger or hitchhiking
- b. Engaging with or making arrangements to meet with an individual who the student met online
- c. Leaving the home or school without permission and/or knowledge of your surroundings
- d. Knowingly going to places where illegal activity could be present (i.e., parties or a friend's house; concerts, after-prom parties, etc.)
- e. Spending time in areas or with individuals that are known to be unsafe.

Irresponsible use of social media/communication outlets:

- a. Engaging in sexually explicit conversations via social media or other digital communications.

- b. Sharing sexually explicit or violent images or videos
- c. Posting or sharing photos that may be sexually suggestive
- d. Posting or sharing content that disparages or demeans any individual, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- e. Putting up content that could compromise the trust, privacy or character of the student's host family or any other member of the community

Spreading Gossip: Intentionally sharing private, confidential or salacious information is considered reckless and irresponsible and will not be tolerated. AYA students should at all times be mindful of how their works, actions and behaviors could impact their reputation or the reputation of others.

Harassment: AYA defines harassment as any instance or repeated instances of conduct which annoys, threatens or causes an individual to fear for his or her safety. AYA will not tolerate any behavior that is intended to threaten, disparage or offend an individual. Examples of harassing behavior include but are not limited to:

- a. Uninvited comments about any individual's appearance
- b. Unwanted touching, gestures or comments of a sexual nature including, verbal, non-verbal and written communication
- c. Derogatory comments intended to disparage or demean an individual based on sex, religion, race, ethnicity, physical or mental challenges, or sexual orientation)
- d. Physical assault of any kind

AYA Program Rules

The program 'rules' are an extension of the AYA Student Code of Conduct that highlight and reinforce specific provisions that students need to be aware of and follow at all times in order to maintain good standing with the program. Failure to abide by the Code of Conduct and Program Rules will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program. It is important to note that AYA has several zero tolerance rules that will result in immediate disqualification from the program. Other serious infractions that could result in *immediate* termination will be reviewed by the disciplinary committee in a disqualification hearing. **Zero tolerance** rules and behavior that could result in immediate dismissal from the program are noted below.

1. **Students must abide by all U.S federal and state laws (Zero Tolerance). Students who violate U.S. law may be subject to prosecution within the American justice system. Students who are 18 years old should be especially mindful that if they break the law, they will be charged and prosecuted as an adult, which could have serious and longstanding effects on their criminal record. Breaking the law is grounds for immediate program termination.**
2. **It is against the law in the United States for high school students to buy or drink alcohol (Zero Tolerance). AYA program rules strictly prohibits the purchase, possession or consumption of alcohol while on-program. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.**
3. **The use and/or possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia under any circumstances is strictly prohibited (Zero Tolerance). Sharing, selling, and using prescription drugs for recreational reasons is forbidden. Examples of illicit drugs include, cocaine, marijuana, LSD, methamphetamines, etc. Breach of this rule will result in immediate termination.**
4. **Expulsion from school has Zero Tolerance. If a student is expelled or a high school rescinds a student's enrollment for behavioral or academic reasons, the student will be disqualified immediately. School suspension will result in immediate probation and is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
5. Harassment/bullying of any kind is strictly prohibited. This includes but is not limited to physical assault, verbal harassment or sexual harassment. **Students who engage or are complicit in the harassment of another individual will be subject to a disciplinary hearing that may result in immediate disqualification.**
6. Students are also not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes while on the AYA program. **Use or possession of tobacco will result in immediate probation and is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
7. Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it and it is permissible in the host state. **Driving outside of program guidelines is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**

8. AYA students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms or any items classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, air/pellet guns, cross bows) under any circumstances including under the supervision of an instructor or host parent. Students should report any instance of firearms being stored improperly or being offered to a student to handle to their LC or the AYA national office. **Possession or use of weapons is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
9. Along with maintaining a minimum grade point average of C+, students must be in good behavioral standing with their high school at all times. This includes attending classes daily and on time, and turning in all required assignments. All students must enroll in a full course of academic classes, which must include math, science, English and history. Students who are home sick for more than a few days must provide a doctor's note for their absence. **Failure to maintain or demonstrate a concerted effort to maintain grade requirements is grounds serious disciplinary action including disqualification.**
10. Sexual intercourse while on program is strictly prohibited and grounds for program termination. Students must be cognizant of inappropriate relationships, including (but not limited to) contact with minors, persons over the age of 18, or any members of the Host Family household. **Sexual intercourse is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
11. Students must abide by AYA's social media policy and remain aware that while they are a participant on the AYA program, they are a reflection AYA and its values. Any social media activity that may bring the student, host family or program notoriety is considered grounds for disciplinary action. Students must act responsibly when using social media and the internet, and be mindful of the websites and platforms they are using. Students are not permitted to visit adult websites, or websites that promote illegal or violent activity. **Using social media or digital communication to exploit yourself or another individual intentionally or otherwise is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
12. Students are expected to be honest and ethical at all times. Misrepresenting personal circumstances in order to change host families or obtain a desired result, is considered very serious. AYA takes the safety of each student very seriously. **If a student is found to have intentionally falsified or misrepresented his or her circumstances within the host family or the community, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including disqualification from the program.**
13. Students may not change families and schools without mediation or due process. With the exception of emergencies, host family changes will not be considered during the first 30 days of arrival to the host family. Students cannot move from the host family home without permission from their Local Coordinator and approval from the AYA national office.
14. Students are strictly prohibited from operating or being a passenger on All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) of any kind. Students are also not permitted to operate or be a passenger on small, private, or non-commercial aircrafts, even with a licensed pilot. AYA students are not permitted to hold part-time jobs; the J-1 visa does not allow it. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation. If students would like to earn spending money during their stay, they are permitted to hold small jobs (no more than 10 hours per week) such as baby-sitting and grass-cutting.
15. Students must respect and abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and voluntarily help with household chores. Students must show respect for their host family and Local Coordinators and follow all program guidelines. Students are expected spend holidays, birthdays, etc. with their host family.
16. Except in cases where a student's safety is in question, students must follow the appropriate chain of communication and contact their Local Coordinator or an AYA support staff member if there is an issue or concern with their host family. Students may not discuss their host family's private affairs or family life with people outside of the home or the AYA program.
17. Students may not make any major life decisions while on program. AYA expects you to return to your home country in the same physical condition that you arrived; this means students may not get pierced, tattooed, or drastically alter their appearance in any way. No student, regardless of age, may enter into any contractual agreement, be it business, marital, or religious, while on the program.
18. Grade placement, graduation eligibility, and athletic participation are determined by the high school. AYA students are required to comply with the policies of the high school in which they are enrolled. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to obtain a diploma, change grades, take a specific course, or participate in sports or extracurricular clubs.
19. Students must abide by the AYA travel and visitation policies noted in the student handbook. Students may not return to their homeland for holidays or for any reason other than an extreme emergency. **Travelling or arranging visits with family or friends without permission or outside of program guidelines will result in immediate probation and may be grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
20. Students must return home within a few days of the last day of school. If absolutely necessary, students may stay up to one week after the end of school, and only with the explicit approval of their host family. When the program ends, students may only sign off the program to be placed in the care of their immediate natural family.