

Hosting Application Management in Global Link Revised for 2011

Background:

Hosting volunteers have had time to reflect on the way the pilot hosting application distribution procedure worked last year. Responses and comments were collected in a survey sent to all volunteers with authorization to put placement requests in the Global Link database. The responses were tabulated and analyzed. In general, a majority of volunteers were satisfied with the system that was used last year; however, two principal trends emerged from the comments. Many volunteers felt that the Community Placement draft was cumbersome and time consuming, expressing a preference to keep students in Regionally Available as long as possible. A smaller number of volunteers felt that they needed to have a pool of Community Placed students earlier in the placement season. We have modified the application distribution procedure to address both of these concerns.

Overview:

Student applications will be assigned to one of 5 Gateway Regions (Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, Houston, New York) by our partners. Once AFS USA staff guarantees an application, it will go immediately to Regionally Available. Once a host family has been identified, volunteers can use the Global Link search capability to identify a group of students with the characteristics they seek. From that group of applications, volunteers can select the best fit, and request a hold while the family reviews the application.

Rather than trying to read every application (a very time consuming process) volunteers will be able to focus on identifying families, and then quickly search for students to match. We will maintain a large pool of available students to facilitate good matches.

Teams will be permitted to Community Place 10% of their team goal on March 1, by entering requests in the GL database. A single Community Placement draft will be held on May 18th in which teams will be required to Community Place the rest of their goal.

1. Releasing students to Regionally Available Status (RA)

- a) All student applications will be released to Regionally Available Status as soon as they are complete and have been reviewed by AFS USA.
- b) Volunteers will be able to search for applications by using an expanded list of interests and characteristics such as country, gender, sporty, weekly churchgoer, or enjoys younger children, for example.

- c) When an application is in Regionally Available status, it may be placed on Hold, or placed with a family by assigning Placed without Papers Status (PWP).

2. Placing Students on Hold – Area Team Hold Status (ATH)

- a) Local hosting volunteers may request an Area Team Hold on a student application that is in Regionally Available status to give volunteers time to reach families, and give families time to make their decision. Holds will automatically be released at 11:45 pm on the fourth day following the request.
- b) A Hold queue may form for some student applications. Each Hold Request will be automatically date stamped at the moment it is requested, and the Hold queue order will be based on the time the Hold is requested. The queue and date stamp will be visible to all hosting volunteers and staff, showing the name of the volunteer making the request, and the name, or names, of families for whom the Hold is requested, and any additional comments.
- c) If there is no one in the queue for a particular student, a team may renew the Hold. If there is a queue, and there are extenuating circumstances delaying a final decision on a student (for example, a family member is out of town) and a longer hold is needed, staff will be able to extend the Hold and add a comment which will be visible. Any hold queue order will be maintained.
- d) If a volunteer anticipates the need to renew a Hold that is scheduled to expire on the weekend, that volunteer should contact the staff on Friday to request the hold extension. If unforeseen circumstances require an extension during a weekend when staff is not available, the volunteer must contact, by phone and email, the volunteer who is next in the queue as well as explain that you will be requesting an extension.
- e) In fairness to the student, volunteers are expected to release the hold as soon as it is apparent that the intended placement will not occur.
- f) Up to 2 active holds per family are permitted at any given time. Any number of hold requests may be submitted for a family since the students they are interested in may have other families in the queue before them.
- g) It is encouraged, but not required, to have a host family interest form on file when you request a Hold.

3. Placing Students with Families – Placed Without Papers Status (PWP)

- a) Once a family commits to hosting a particular student and at least a verbal approval has been given by the school, students may be assigned PWP status. The family name will be entered and visible to volunteers and staff.
- b) A signed Placement Acceptance Form (PAF) must be obtained at the earliest possible opportunity.
- c) In extenuating circumstances, where school approval will be delayed for a longer period of time due to school procedures, a PWP request may be entered without verbal approval.
- d) If the school refuses to accept the student or the family backs out, the student must be returned immediately to Regionally Available.
- e) As in the past, once all paperwork, background checks, references, etc., are in, staff will transfer the host family application to the partner country to share with the student, and assign Family Papers Mailed (FPM) status to the student. Note: This will also happen if the only form missing is the PAF, though the PAF must be secured prior to the student leaving his/her home country. Once the PAF is secured, as well as all other paperwork and background checks, staff will update the student to Family Placement Confirmed (FPC) status.
- f) If a volunteer is ready to enter a PWP request for a student who is on hold for another team or chapter, the PWP request will not be honored until the current hold expires. However, we suggest a phone call to the volunteer with the student on Hold because we don't want to delay the placement unnecessarily. If there are, in addition, pending Hold Requests in the queue that were entered *prior* to the PWP request, the volunteer who submits the PWP request should also contact the volunteers with pending Hold Requests to let them know they have a PWP request and ask them if they would be willing to cede to the PWP request. If the volunteers with pending Hold requests do not want to cede to the PWP request, all pending Hold requesters have 48 hours to finalize a placement. If more than one team with a pending request is able to PWP the student at the end of the 48-hour period, the PWP requests will be honored in the order in which they exist in the request queue.

4. Placing Students Directly in Schools – School Placed Status (SP)

Schools that have particular needs and requirements may take advantage of the School Placed status.

- a) The School Placed status must be assigned by staff. This status will be used when a school guarantees acceptance of a particular student with a signed Placement Acceptance Form. This status is used by schools that have special entrance requirements (e.g., a private school offers a complete scholarship to a student with strong academics, or an art school requires a student with a particular talent).
- b) If the school fails to find a family for the student by May 14, the team must decide either to Community Place the student and forego their first pick in the CP draft or to return the student to Regionally Available.

5. Selecting up to 10% of your Goal – Community Placed Status (CP)

- *Teams that find it easier to place students from a list of applications that are theirs alone may Community Place up to 10% of their goal on March 1st by entering CP requests in the Global Link system*
 - *By limiting the number of students who are CP'd early, we are maintaining a large pool from which to match students as families are recruited.*
 - *Teams who place students from their Community Placed list will be rewarded by being permitted to select another student from Regionally Available, up to the 10% limit.*
- a) By March 1 we expect to have accepted and processed about 20% of all applications from our partners. At that time, teams will be permitted to enter CP requests in the Global Link system for up to 10% of their hosting goal. All outstanding holds on the students will be honored before the student is CP'd to the requesting team.
 - b) A team may choose not to Community Place their full 10% or any students on March 1. They may prefer to continue to place students from the Regionally Available pool or wait for additional students to be released. After March 1, a team may enter a CP request directly, anytime, on Global Link, for up to 10% of their commitment. The request will become part of the Hold Queue, if one exists.
 - c) As each of the Community Placed students is Placed Without Papers, Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters may add another student from the Regionally Available pool to replenish their Community Placed pool, up to the 10% limit, regardless of how many students they have already family placed.
 - d) If another team/chapter has a family for a Community Placed student, teams should cooperate as much as possible with each other. Area Team/Unaffiliated Chapter Hosting Coordinators are encouraged to communicate with each other to negotiate trades. *Good matches and timely placements for all students and families are our primary goals.* If a team allows their student to be placed by another team, they may decide whether to Community Place another student from Regionally Available, or negotiate a direct trade with the team who placed their student.
 - e) We suggest an electronic bulletin board (Google Page?) for each Gateway Region, where volunteers can find contact information for other hosting coordinators and communicate among themselves, requesting help in finding a particular type of student or help in placing a particular student, for example.
 - f) We suggest that regional hosting staff send out occasional bio lists of kids whose applications have been sitting around without much action for a period of time, to help keep them visible to hosting volunteers.

6. Distributing the Remaining Students – May 18 Core Community Placement Draft

- *Every student will have assigned volunteers working to find them a family, 2 months before the international placement deadline, July 20.*
- *Teams who meet their commitment early will not have to participate in the CP Draft. They will already have Family Placed or Community Placed (up to their 10% allotment) all the students they agreed to host. This is an incentive for teams to complete their placements before the end of the school year.*

- a) On May 18 there will be a draft, using a round robin system, to Community Place the rest of each team's goal (minus their Sponsored Programs goal, if they have a cluster). Each Area Team or Unaffiliated Chapter will create a CP Request List of students they would like to Community Place. The hosting staff will work through the Request Lists, in lottery-determined order, to assign students to Area Teams/Unaffiliated Chapters as Community Placed. Each gateway region will determine the best way to manage the round robin process among larger and smaller teams and unaffiliated chapters, according to hosting goals, and notify the volunteers in advance.
- b) Area Team Hosting Coordinators will facilitate the Community Placement process among local hosting volunteers. Local hosting volunteers may suggest particular students to be put on the Area Team Community Placed Request List.
- c) Family Placements should take precedence over Community Placements. If a student is on hold at the time of the draft, the request to Community Place must go in the hold queue. If the student is Placed Without Papers before he/she can be Community Placed, volunteers can select another student from the Regionally Available pool.
- d) To facilitate the processing of the hold queues, a temporary moratorium on all holds will be called on May 14.
- e) Students will be assigned to Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters up to their commitment, thus guaranteeing that every unplaced student has someone who is working actively on their behalf from May 18 onward.
- f) Between May 18 and July 15 teams can continue to swap applications within the Gateway Region to facilitate better matches.
- g) After July 15 teams may negotiate trades only within the *orientation* site geography.

Note: On May 18 it may take a few days of “clean up” time between the time the final CP requests are submitted to staff, and staff makes the assignments. This will give volunteers a chance to work through and hopefully accelerate the hold process for the remaining holds. In other words, we will try to determine as quickly as possible whether the families waiting in the Hold Queue are ready to commit to the student or not. This process will be managed by the hosting volunteers working directly with the families, but the process will be monitored by the staff member who will be doing the CP assignments, so that a team does not use up a CP spot if the student is likely to be PWP'd by one of the families in the Hold Queue.

7. Respecting the Larger Partner and Sponsored Programs Matrices – Program Diversity

- a) Teams are expected to place their fair share of students from our larger partners, students that are harder to place (allergic, grads, etc.) and boys.
- b) Staff will monitor the placement of students from our larger partners and Sponsored Programs by distributing a matrix periodically, showing the distribution among Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters of placed and available applications.
- c) Staff will consider the larger partner matrix, harder to place students, and gender distribution as the final students are CP'd on May 18 to make sure that teams have taken the appropriate number of students in these categories.

8. Placing all Students on Time – the 48-Hour Rule

- *After the CP draft, all students will be available to the first family and school in their Gateway Region willing to commit to hosting them for the year or semester.*
- *Hosting Coordinators are encouraged to communicate openly and to cooperate in order to provide the best placements for all arriving students.*
- *Earlier placements will help us meet compliance goals and ensure that students get information about their host families as soon as possible.*

- a) After May 18, if a team has a family that might be interested in hosting a student CP'd to another Area Team or Unaffiliated Chapter, the hosting coordinator for that team must contact the hosting coordinator for the team where the student is CP'd to request permission to show the student.
- b) If the family would like to host the student and school permission can be obtained, the hosting coordinator with the placement must contact the hosting coordinator where the student is CP'd directly (by phone or with an email response) to negotiate a trade. If the team currently holding the student doesn't want to trade, the 48-hour rule will be invoked. The team currently holding the student then has 48 hours to secure a placement for the student.
- c) Permanent year and semester placements should be given priority over welcome placements.
- d) The team originally holding the student has 48 hours to provide the name of a family willing to host for the year or semester, and a school, or the student will be released to the new team for the permanent family and school placement. (Please note that this rule will not be applied blindly. If the original team can demonstrate that they too have a family and are waiting only for school approval, the 48-hour time period may be extended.)
- e) The team with the family then has 24 hours to PWP the student.
- f) The team who has relinquished the student may either select a replacement student from the team that made the placement, or reduce their commitment number by one. If the team who has relinquished the student chooses to reduce their commitment, the team with the placement, must increase its commitment by one.

- g) The 48-hour rule applies only to permanent family placements. One team may not take another team's community placed student using the 48-hour rule to make a welcome placement.

For Teams with Sponsored Programs Clusters Only

9. Sponsored Programs Students – Nationally Available until Sponsored Programs Draft

- *YES and FLEX students will be kept in Nationally Available status until they are assigned to Gateways a few days before the Sponsored Programs Draft. This will facilitate the best possible host family matches.*
 - *All Sponsored Programs students should be assigned to teams at the beginning of June, so that all students have champions 10 weeks before arrivals.*
- a) CB students will be assigned to a gateway from the beginning and released into Regionally Available status as soon as their applications have been approved and accepted by AFS USA. Their applications will be managed in the same way that core applications are, except that they cannot be Community Placed until the Sponsored Programs draft.
- b) Other Sponsored Programs (FLEX and YES) applications will be released into Nationally Available status as soon as they have been received and processed by AFS USA.
- c) Teams can show FLEX and YES students to prospective host families by placing a hold request in Global Link. If the Global Link system has not been modified such that students on hold in a particular region remain visible nationally, the requests will not be accepted, but after 4 days the hosting staff will reject the hold so that the next team in the hold queue knows they can show the student.
- d) On May 31 all FLEX and YES students will be assigned to a gateway and there will be a moratorium on hold requests.
- e) On June 3 there will be a Sponsored Programs draft for each region including all unplaced CB, FLEX, and YES students, organized in a way similar to the core CP draft. Teams will CP their Sponsored Programs commitment.
- f) Trading of Sponsored Programs students will follow the same rules as trading of core students. The 48-hour rule will be in effect and teams will be permitted to trade within a gateway until July 15. After July 15 trades will be restricted to orientation site geography.