Handbook for International Students

HOMESTAY REFERRAL PROGRAM
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Meet the International Housing Staff

Diane Arguijo, Director of International Education: arguijod@smccd.edu

Diane Arguijo is the Director of International Education for the San Mateo Community College District (Cañada College, College of San Mateo, and Skyline College). In this role, she is responsible for international education partnerships, international student recruitment, and international program development (including Housing) for all three colleges. Ms. Arguijo has over twenty-five years of professional experience in counseling and educational administration. A native Californian, Ms. Arguijo has spent most of her life in Northern California but lived for several years in South America. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Counseling from the University of San Francisco and holds an Administrative Services credential from San Jose State University.

Julnar Msalam, Housing Program Coordinator: housingcoordinator@smccd.edu

As an International Student Housing Program Coordinator for the three colleges in the San Mateo Community College District, Julnar is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with host families throughout the community. She supervises the general housing inquiries, recruits new families, approves home visits, processes background checks, manages the homestay database, initiates’ homestay referrals, and matches students with compatible host families. Julnar has worked in the Counseling and Transfer Department, as well as helping students in the Associate’s to Bachelor program for six years. Julnar has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature, from the University of Jerash in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Cindy Nguyen, International Program Specialist: nguyencindy@smccd.edu

Cindy helps with producing and gathering marketing materials for recruitment efforts locally and abroad. She assists with the coordination and implementation of both the Homestay Referral Program and Global Beca International Student Scholarship. Besides processing expense reports, she also processes new student applications for the Homestay Referral Program. Cindy works closely with Julnar to resolve student and host issues in the program. She was born in Vietnam, studied Mandarin in Taiwan during her last year at UC Santa Barbara, and taught English in South Korea for two years.
Homestay Expectations for International Students

Placement and Change Fees:
Students must pay a $250 application Placement Fee to be matched with a host family. Prior to the completion of the initial two months, they must stay with the same host family unless they are requesting to leave due to any of the valid reasons stated below.

Valid reasons for placing a student at a new homestay without charging a fee are:
1) There is a real or implied threat of harm towards the student.
2) The host family alters the terms of the original homestay agreement (Example: A family stops providing meals for their student, or increases the rent.)
3) The host family is unable to continue hosting the student due to personal reasons not caused by the student.

Unless they have one of the valid reasons listed above, students will be charged a $100 Change Fee each time they wish to change their homestay placement after the initial two months. There is no fee if students want to continue living with the same host family.

Rent:
The Homestay Referral Program is based on a two (2) month contract agreement between SMCCCD, the host, and the student. On the first day of moving in, students must pay the host two months’ rent, according to their homestay option, plus a security deposit of $500. The security deposit is refundable once the student moves out, as long as the criteria within the contract is followed for the security deposit. After the first two months, students can request to move out (with a 30-day written notice) or continue living with the same host, but paying rent on a monthly basis.

Students who decide to move out prior to the completion of two months will not get a refund of the prepaid two months’ rent. However, extreme situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. At any time during their participation in the Homestay Referral Program, if a student is asked to move out because they have broken a house rule after repeated warnings, the remainder of that month’s rent will not be refunded.

If a student decides to move out and they’re currently sharing a room, their roommate will continue to pay the same rental rate while the Homestay Referral Program is working on finding another student to be matched with the host family.

The Homestay Referral Program does not manage or negotiate rental payments. Our program is an opportunity for hosts and students to learn from one another and exchange different cultural experiences to enhance cultural awareness.
Security Deposit:
If the student chooses to move out of their homestay early and does not provide the host family with 30-day written notice, the student may risk losing some or all of their $500 security deposit, if the funds are needed to pay any rent left owing.

After a student moves out, the host family has 30 days to either return the deposit, or give a written statement of why all or part of the money is being kept. If a student moves out early, the host family may keep part or all of the security deposit to pay rent that would be due. If any funds are used for cleaning or repairs the family will provide the student with receipts showing the cost of services or repairs performed.

Optional Cleaning Fee:
Some host families hire professional cleaners to occasionally clean the house, including the student’s bedroom. It could be an additional $200-500 a semester. This is separate from the Homestay Fees and should be negotiated between the student and the host family. Students have the option to decline this service and request to be matched with a new host family if they require it. The student will not be charged a Change Fee in this situation.

Whether the host family hires a professional cleaner or not, the students are expected to keep their bedroom and shared areas in the house neat and tidy at all times.

What is Provided:
Per the SMCCCD homestay agreement, host families must provide a room that is furnished with a bed, linens, chest of drawers, desk, chair, closet and window. Internet and utilities are included in the rental agreement and no additional bills should be charged to the student for payment.

It is expected that the student respects the facilities in the home and follow the host’s rules for the space in the home. It is expected that if a student uses the house phone for long distance calls, they will pay for the long distance calls. A telephone card or a cell phone might be the best solution. In addition to the bathroom and kitchen access, students will have access to the laundry room to wash their clothes. The student should provide their own laundry soap and not use the hosts’ detergent unless instructed by the host family. Even if they have chosen a homestay option that provides them with two meals a day, students are responsible for purchasing their own snacks.

Holiday and Semester Breaks:
Students who plan to leave for an extended period of time during the holiday or semester breaks must inform the host family whether they plan to return to live in their homestay or not. If the student would like to continue living with the host family, the student will continue to pay the required rent during their absence to remain in the room.
Student Guidelines for Living in a Homestay:
Once the student has arrived and is settled into their homestay, our office recommends that each host review the student homestay guideline form with the student, which both parties should have signed before move-in day. This form is specific to the student’s homestay option and is provided to both host and student as a tool to discuss the rental agreement and clarify any questions regarding the homestay contract. It is also a good time for hosts to review house rules. At this time, students should be prepared to provide the host family with the payment for their two months’ rent and security deposit.

U.S. immigration laws require that new students report to the college after their initial arrival in the country. Each new student must attend a mandatory new student orientation session at which time they will check in with their college representative.

House Rules and Federal Law:
The host family should inform and explain the house rules to the student upon move-in. If the student breaks a rule and is warned by the host of the consequences of their behavior yet continues to break house rules, the host family can ask the student to leave their home. We encourage the host to provide the student with adequate time to move out, but it is not guaranteed. If the student is asked to leave the home for breaking the rules, the student will no longer be eligible to participate in our homestay program, and the remainder of that months’ rent will not be refunded.

Students must obey local, state and federal law. Drinking alcohol and smoking are prohibited until age 21. Smoking is not allowed in most homes. Illegal drugs are prohibited for persons of any age and students should not be associated with anyone involved with illegal drugs in any way.

Although California has legalized marijuana, it is still illegal to buy, smoke, or grow marijuana under federal law in the United States. The F1 Visa is a federal visa so international students must adhere to federal laws at all times. If a student is caught smoking marijuana (even if they have a medical marijuana card), their F1 visa status could be revoked and they could be expelled from their program of study.

Communication:
Students should communicate with the host family their move-in and move-out dates. The student should also notify the host if they do not plan to be home for a certain period of time, especially if they have chosen a homestay option with a meal plan.

Misunderstandings happen due to language barrier, cultural differences, or lack of communication. It is important for students to directly communicate with their host family if they are concerned or unhappy about something. If it’s a serious situation, students should immediately inform the staff members of the Homestay Referral Program so they may intervene and offer assistance.
Public Transportation:
The student should coordinate his or her own transportation to and from campus. The student is responsible for purchasing their own bus fare or “clipper card” for public transportation. It is the student’s responsibility to determine their own transportation schedule and plan accordingly when needing to commute to class, campus, or other locations. If a host decides to provide transportation to and from a location, that service is voluntary and not required by our program, so no additional fee payment can be charged to the student.

Our Homestay Referral Program requires that each family lives within 15 minutes of walking distance to the bus stop and not more than 60 minutes by bus to the college (including transfers, and walk to bus stop). The host should be willing on the first week of the student’s arrival to orient the student to the public transportation website, bus stop location, and to buying a bus pass. While we know that most students are familiar with Uber and Lyft options for commuting to campus, it is expected that most students will commute throughout the bay area via public transportation.

Privacy laws:
As an institution, we uphold the regulations by the U.S. Department of Education to implement the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for each student who applies to our homestay referral program. Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personal, identifiable information from an eligible student’s education records to a third party unless the eligible student has provided written consent.

Homestay Liability Release for Students Under Age 18:
Our homestay application requires students under the age of 18 to complete a liability release form. The student and their parent(s) must sign a liability release form prior to the student being placed in a homestay.

The release form specifically states that the parent(s) acknowledge that their child is under the age of eighteen (legal adult status in the United States), and that they - not the host family, nor San Mateo County Community College District - San Mateo Colleges of Silicon Valley – will be held responsible for their child’s actions while the student lives in the United States. The parent(s) agree to pay the full amount for any and all damages in the homestay for which their child is responsible, regardless of whether the damages were accidental. The parent(s) also agree to release all liabilities for any injury, loss, damage, accident, delay or expense resulting from participation in the homestay program.
Housing Options & Costs

Option 1: Private room with meals: $1,475/month
This option is for students who desire a private room and 2 meals per day (breakfast & dinner only) 7 days a week. With this option, the family will provide the student with breakfast items that the student can “grab-and-go” or prepare for him/herself. The student should have access to the kitchen for lunches as lunch is not provided in their meal plan.

Option 2: Private room without meals: $1,175/month
This option is for students who desire a private room but choose to take care of all their own meals. The host family must provide student access to the kitchen for cooking and provide the student with cabinet and refrigerator space to store food.

Option 3: Shared Room with meals: $1,075/month
This option is for students who select to share a room with another international student. This option includes 2 meals per day (breakfast & dinner only) 7 days a week. This option should provide student with access to the kitchen for lunches.

Option 4: Shared Room without meals: $775/month
This option is for students who request to share a room with another international student. This option does not include a meal plan and allows students to prepare all their meals on their own. The family must provide access to the kitchen for cooking and provide the student with cabinet and refrigerator space to store food.
Opening a Bank Account

At the time of admission, all international (F-1 Visa) students are required by federal law to document adequate funding for study. We expect that all students will have sufficient funds for tuition, fees, books, health insurance, living expenses and other miscellaneous costs. We recommend that all students open a checking account at a local bank or financial institution. When opening a bank account, the student will need to bring:

- 2 forms of Identification:
  - Passport
  - U.S. driver’s license or college campus identification card
- SEVIS Form I-20 and;
- Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record;
- Enrollment verification letter from the school or a letter from the homestay program

Once students have a U.S. bank account number, they will be able to send the information to their home bank in order to make transferring money easier and faster. It’s also a good idea for students to inform their parents or relatives about the transfer options.

**Banks near CSM**
- CitiBank
  - 61 W. Hillsdale Blvd.
  - [online.citi.com/US/login.do](http://online.citi.com/US/login.do)
- San Mateo Credit Union
  - 1515 South El Camino Real
  - [www.smcu.org](http://www.smcu.org)
- Bank of America
  - 3150 Campus Drive
  - [www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com)
- Wells Fargo Bank
  - 100 DeAnza Blvd.
  - [www.wellsfargo.com](http://www.wellsfargo.com)
- Chase
  - 1730 South El Camino Real
  - [www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)

**Banks near Skyline College**
- US Bank
  - 2255 Gellert Blvd
  - [www.usbank.com/index.html](http://www.usbank.com/index.html)
- Chase
  - Westborough Blvd #601
  - [www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)

**Banks near Cañada College**
- CitiBank
  - 702 Marshall Street #100
  - (650)569-4913
  - [online.citi.com/US/login.do](http://online.citi.com/US/login.do)
- First Republic Bank
  - 776 El Camino Real
  - (650)216-8883
  - [www.firstrepublic.com](http://www.firstrepublic.com)
- Bank of America
  - 700 Jefferson Avenue
  - (650)562-0705
  - [www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com)
- Wells Fargo Bank
  - 1070 El Camino Real
  - (650)368-9940
  - [www.wellsfargo.com](http://www.wellsfargo.com)
- Chase
  - 1615 Woodside Road
  - (650)306-4080
  - [www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)
Transportation

San Mateo County Transit Bus (SamTrans)

SamTrans provides bus service along several routes to our college campus.

3 bus routes to College of San Mateo:
- Route 250 (San Mateo downtown and Caltrain)
- Route 260 (San Carlos Caltrain, Redwood Shores & Belmont)
- Route 294 (Half Moon Bay)

2 bus routes to San Mateo County College:
- Route 274
- Route 278

2 bus routes to Cañada College:
- Route 274
- Route 278

2 bus routes to Skyline College:
- Routes 121: starts at Lowell and Hanover streets, then serves the Daly City BART station, Seton Medical Center, Colma BART, Serramonte, Fairmont and Westview on its way to the College.
- Route 140: delivers students traveling from Pacifica and San Bruno BART.
  Weekend note: The 140 is the only line that provides service to the College on weekends.


Bay Area Rapid Transit Train (BART)

BART is a public transportation system serving the San Francisco Bay Area. The rapid transit elevated and subway system connects San Francisco with cities in the East Bay and the northern portion of San Mateo County. BART’s rapid transit system operates 5 routes on 104 miles of track, with 44 stations in 4 counties, which are Alameda County, Contra Costa County, City and County of San Francisco, and San Mateo County. BART connects to Daly City, Colma, and San Bruno. For more information, visit www.bart.gov.

Daly City BART shuttle to Skyline College: The Skyline College Express shuttle service (http://www.skylinecollege.edu/maps/shuttle.php) will run every hour from 7:25 a.m. to 6:44 p.m., Mondays to Fridays. The 28-person shuttle service will be open to students, faculty and staff as well as community members who utilize the services available on campus such as SparkPoint, the Library and Veterans Resource Center. You can pick up the Daly City Bart shuttle downstairs from the platform. Turn right as you exit the ticket area, and cross the street to the shuttle stop.
California Commuter Rail Line (CalTrain)

Caltrain provides commuter rail service along the San Francisco Peninsula, through the South Bay to San Jose and Gilroy. The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company began passenger rail service on the Peninsula in 1863. The system we know today as Caltrain had its start in 1992, when the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board took over the operation of the train. For more information, visit [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).

Clipper

The all-in-one transit card that keeps track of any passes, discount tickets, ride books and cash value that you load onto it. Used for travel on SamTrans and Caltrain. Our office recommends that students learn about the benefits of using a clipper card for any of their public transportation needs. For more information on obtaining a card please visit [www.clippercard.com](http://www.clippercard.com).

California Driver’s License

Students must have a California Driver’s License to drive in the State of California. New student will need to wait at least 10 days after entering the United States before applying for CA driver’s license and the student’s SEVIS record must be registered by the college administrator before applying as well. The 10-day waiting period allows time for all the government databases to be updated with student arrival information. If applying prior to 10 days, the application may be denied or delayed. The DMV will require proof of birth date and legal status when applying for a driver’s license. Students should be prepared to show the following documents:

- Form I-20
- Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record –To access the electronic form students need to go to [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94) and print a copy.
- Passport with visa (if applicable)
- Students do not need a social security number to apply for a California driver’s license. However, if requested to show a social security card, students will need to get a letter from the Social Security office verifying that the student is not eligible for a social security number. For more information on obtaining a California Driver’s License, please visit the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website [www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv).

The international student centers on each college campus can also provide students with further detailed information.
International Education

Homestay Referral Program

3401 CSM Drive
San Mateo, CA 94402
United States

Phone: (650) 358-6856
Email: housingcoordinator@smccd.edu
Website: smccd.edu/international/housing.php