

Final Report

Homestay Program: 2008 Review
Department of Education
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador



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Executive Summary

Context

The primary goal of this project is to review the Homestay component of the international studies program in both the Eastern and Western School Districts for the purposes of informing future program policies, practices and guidelines. This project required:

- A profile of School Districts who actively recruit international students, including an historical review of the number of students recruited and demographic information regarding ages, country of origin, grade level placements and community of residence.
- A review of provincial and School District policies and procedures respecting the Homestay Program.
- A review of all current records/documentation maintained by School Districts and an assessment of the adequacy of these records/documents to ensure appropriate standards are in place.
- A review of the student and host families' recruitment policies, procedures and activities, including the involvement of agents and any other third parties.
- A review of the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, School Districts, agents, Homestay families and parents in the Homestay Program.
- A review of best practices related to Homestay programs for students who participate in international education, including a cross-jurisdictional analysis of Homestay Programs within K-12 international education in Canada.
- A review and assessment of the approval and supervision policies for homestay families.
- An assessment of supports provided to Homestay families, natural families and students.
- A review of the role and appropriate qualifications of the Homestay coordinators.
- A determination of any custodian/consent/legal issues which are pertinent.
- Recommendations for international education Homestay Programs, including but not limited to legislative requirements, best practice policies, policy guidelines, and roles and responsibilities of relevant partners.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the International Student Education Program is offered throughout the K-12 grade levels. However, the vast majority of international students avail of the junior high or high school curriculum. Elementary students are accepted into the program, but only if they are accompanied by a parent or chaperone.

For the 2007-08 academic, 42 of the 61 students in grades K-12 within the Eastern School District participate in the Homestay Program and in the Western School district, 40 of the

43 students in the K-12 system participate in the Homestay Program.

Throughout this Homestay Review project, there was an exceptionally high degree of cooperation of personnel from the International Student Education Program in the Eastern and Western School Districts, from the Department of Education and in other provincial jurisdictions. This bodes well for future mutual efforts to build a best practice environment for the Homestay Program.

Project Methodology

To meet the objectives of the Homestay Program Review, several data collection methods were undertaken as follows:

- Interviews with 3 Eastern School District personnel and with 2 Western School District personnel;
- Interviews and meetings with the Department of Education;
- Review of data collected by the Director, International Education Division Corporate Planning & International Education, Department of Education;
- Seven focus groups in the Eastern and Western School District schools, involving a total of 24 Homestay students;
- A focus group with Homestay Families in each of the Eastern and Western School Districts, involving a total of 12 families;
- Review of documents from the Eastern and Western School Districts;
- A file audit consisting of an inspection of 12 Homestay student files and the corresponding Homestay Family file(s) in each of the Eastern and Western School Districts;
- An email survey of agents, with 3 agents providing input;
- Interviews with representatives of the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Justice and the Eastern and Western Regional Health Authorities; and
- A cross-jurisdictional review to determine roles of other provincial Ministries of Education in international student education and of other school boards to determine best practices in Homestay programming and policy.

Key Findings

In other Canadian jurisdictions, the Ministries of Education have been limited to virtually no legislative authority for international student education. Where there is a role, it is limited to the Minister's ability to set fees for international students who come to the province for education purposes. Therefore, the role and scope of K-12 school boards in international student education in other provinces has evolved without a legislative framework.

The legislative authority for ensuring optimal safety and well-being of Homestay students is absent for both the Department of Education and the School Districts in Newfoundland and Labrador. The current *Schools Act* is essentially silent on international education within the K-12 system, except for the provision whereby the Minister of Education may set fees for international students who have come to the province for the purpose of attending school (Section 117(b) (ix)) and for School Districts to charge fees (Sections 12 (2) (b) and 14 (2)). Thus, the *Schools Act* currently does not provide the Minister with the authority for establishing policy or issuing policy directives, nor does it make specific provision for school district boards to deliver the range of international education programs currently being offered.

There are benefits to the International Student Education programs offered by the Eastern and Western School Districts. International education programs offer students from other countries the opportunity to experience a new culture and learn the English language. Introducing international students to classrooms and schools enriches the learning experiences of other students and instils a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and of different practices and beliefs. It allows for the development of long lasting friendships for both international students as well as students in host schools. It has the potential to serve as a feeder system for post-secondary institutions and to spur economic development. Host schools receive a payment for each international student that represents an important source of funds to support individual school programming and extracurricular activities.

However, these benefits must outweigh the risks associated with hosting minor children, far away from their home countries and natural parents. The 2007 file review of the Homestay family and student files conducted by the Department of Health revealed considerable documentation weaknesses and significant risk exposure. The Eastern School District has demonstrated that effective remedial measures can be quickly implemented. This School District has invested significant time and resources to ensure that recommendations from the 2007 file review are being implemented.

The areas of most considerable risk identified through this review are in the following areas:

- Assessment of Homestay family applicants;
- Documentation of processes; and
- Sufficiency of monitoring of Homestay families and students.

In addition, as the International K-12 Student Education Program further matures and grows, some areas of risk may become more prominent, requiring for example, background checks on student applicants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the urgency of addressing these and other areas, the School Districts, on an immediate basis should conclude the draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program based upon due consideration of the recommendations in this report. However, implementation of the Guidelines should be considered as mutually agreed upon policy between the School Districts and the Department of Education. Furthermore, the School Districts should aim to have new processes in place prior to the commencement of 2008-09 academic year. This should set the stage for Homestay Program policy and practices that are known to be effective and establish a basis for a future legislative framework.

Throughout the course of this review, it was evident there are unresolved issues relating to receiving timely CYFS checks. As part of the School Districts roles and responsibilities, memorandums of understanding should be established with the Regional Health Authorities regarding the CYFS checks. These memorandums of understanding should be reviewed at least every 2 years and if issues arise, on a more frequent basis.

Specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Roles and Responsibilities:

In the absence of a legislative framework for International Student Education and the Homestay Program in particular, a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Education and the Eastern and Western School Districts should be developed as soon as possible. This memorandum should seek to address roles and responsibilities of each partner and especially the role of The Department of Education in ensuring the Homestay Program is compliant with the policies and standards established in the draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program.

2. Draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program:

The draft guidelines should be concluded on an immediate basis and incorporate the recommendations included in this report. It is further recommended that the implementation of the Guidelines be considered as mutually agreed upon policy between the School Districts and the Department of Education.

3. Criminal Checks:

Criminal and vulnerable sector checks should be conducted annually on all family and household members 18 years of age and over, and on family and household members who reach age 18 during the course of a Homestay Program placement. Families should be required to immediately report to the Homestay program any family or household member who is either a suspect in a crime or where a criminal charge has been laid.

Children of Homestay families who are between the ages of 12 and 18 should have documented school reference checks.

4. CYFS Checks:

CYFS checks should be conducted biannually for all Homestay family and household members 18 years of age and over, and on family and household members who reach age 18 during the course of a Homestay Program placement. Families should be required to immediately report to the Homestay program any change to the family or household membership and of any encounter with the CYFS system.

For both criminal and CYFS, the Eastern and Western School Districts should retain the right to request more frequent checks that might be warranted.

5. Documentation Standards and Training:

As there are documentation weaknesses apparent in the Homestay family and Homestay student files, it is recommended that documentation standards be developed and that training of these standards be conducted with International Student Education Program staff Homestay Coordinators. As noted elsewhere, this work could be undertaken by a social worker under a contractual basis.

6. Critical Incident Management:

A critical incident management plan should be established to ensure these incidences are documented, reported to the appropriate officials, communicated to the natural family and managed to avoid negative publicity both locally and internationally. This plan should identify those involved and their roles, responsibilities and accountability as well as the procedures to be followed.

7. Guardianship:

Greater clarity for Homestay families, Homestay students and their natural parents,

schools, and the program generally regarding guardianship is required. All parties need to understand that a guardian is accessible on a 24/7 basis, and the alternate contact in the event the guardian is travelling outside the region or cannot be physically present in the event of an emergency. A hierarchical structure may be required that enables an alternate in the event the guardian cannot be reached. Having the guardianship tied to a role versus a person may be viable, though legal advice is required to assess the implications of this alternative. In addition, the Homestay Orientation program and related documents should provide all guardian contact information as well as a clear list of issues and concerns that require immediate referral to a guardian.

8. Homestay Family Agreement:

A legal Homestay family agreement should be in place. This agreement should include detail on the following aspects of the program:

- Fee schedule payment to Homestay families
- A clause outlining the program will strive to meet the requests of the Homestay family in student selection, but cannot guarantee all requests will be met.
- General housing conditions, expectations and responsibilities of the Homestay family.
- Grounds for Homestay family termination and student removal including notification requirements and immediate removal of a student.
- Exclusion of liability. This section should indicate that the School District is not responsible for any damages or injuries that the Homestay family may experience as a result of hosting an international student. It should also advise the Homestay family to contact their insurance provider to ensure they have adequate coverage for the student while in their home.

9. Homestay Move Requirements and Procedures:

The following requirements and procedures should be in place to guide Homestay moves and procedures:

- Students should not be able to change Homestay families during an academic year more than twice and a third time in exceptional cases only. Continued movement of students from one Homestay family to another is an indicator of poor adjustment, insufficient support or monitoring and/or of the need to return the student to their home country.
- If a Homestay move is not warranted for safety or security reasons, the student should pay a fee.
- The student should be driven by the Homestay coordinator to the new Homestay

family. This will avoid the two families meeting.

- If a Homestay family has more than two students moved from their home for whatever reason, an investigation should be launched.
- The reasons for the move must be documented and the agent and natural parents must be notified of the move prior to it occurring. The natural parent's knowledge and approval of the move should be documented on the student's file.

10. Homestay Coordinator Qualifications:

- While access to social work expertise is required to further improve the Homestay program, it need not be a skill and educational requirement of the Homestay Coordinators. The Eastern and Western School Districts should consider options for accessing this level of expertise. Options might include engaging a social worker on a contractual basis in each School District or cost sharing this resource between the two Districts. Discussions need to occur between the two Districts to assess which option is most viable.

It is envisioned this professional would act as a resource to the Homestay Coordinators, most notably in the selection of Homestay families and managing student and Homestay family relations. In addition, this professional would be responsible for designing and delivering the coordinator's orientation along with ongoing training requirements. This professional could also be engaged to conduct internal audits.

The following topics should be covered in the Homestay Coordinator orientation process:

- ✓ Cross-cultural communication and sensitivities
- ✓ Legal issues relating to the Homestay Program
- ✓ Documentation requirements and methods
- ✓ Conflict resolution
- ✓ Counselling
- ✓ Interview techniques
- ✓ Homestay Family selection
- ✓ Risk management
- ✓ Emergency protocols

11. Homestay Coordinators (additional responsibilities and practices):

It is recommended that:

- Homestay Coordinators should conduct both scheduled and unscheduled Homestay visits.
- Homestay Coordinators should have the right to move a student without advance

notice if a situation is perceived to be unsatisfactory or unsafe. The program should also reserve the right to terminate a family's participation in the program if the family does not provide a safe and satisfactory environment for the student.

- A performance management process should be established for the Homestay Coordinators.

12. Homestay Application Process:

It is recommended that:

- All background checks and assessments and home inspections should be completed prior to student placement.
- The host school (principal or guidance councillor) should be contacted and provide information on the prospective Homestay family's relationship with the school.
- Homestay applications should be updated whenever there is a change in the household composition or on an annual basis.
- A Homestay family should consist of at least one adult 25 years of age or older.
- The criminal check should be updated annually and CYFS check should be updated every two years. For both checks, the Program should retain the right to request more frequent checks as a result of change in the household composition or any sign or symptom that might indicate the need for additional checks.
- Homestay families should not be permitted to request a damage deposit or any additional fees from the student.
- A surplus of Homestay families should be recruited. This will improve the suitability of matches and avoid pressure caused by a shortage of families. It will also assist in those situations where students must be removed from a Homestay family immediately for whatever reasons.
- Homestay families should be no more than 30 minutes from the host school by public transportation.
- Photos of the Homestay family and their home should be on file. The use of these files must be in accordance with privacy laws.
- Homestay staff, their immediate relatives, as well as individuals working in the host school should not be eligible to become Homestay families. Students in such environments may not be forthcoming with problems or issues they are experiencing with their Homestay, as they have no objective third party to approach.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a Homestay Selection Committee in each School District. This committee would be responsible for reviewing all Homestay applications and overseeing the selection process. When a potential Homestay family has completed the application process, including the interview,

home inspection, and reference, criminal, and CYFS checks, their application would be submitted to the committee for final approval. The social work resource previously identified could be an active member of this committee.

13. Data Management:

It is recommended that:

- Measures to ensure the security of all files (manual and electric) should be implemented and accessible only to Homestay staff. All electronic files should be password protected.
- Homestay staff should have 24-hour access to pertinent student and Homestay family information in the event of an emergency. This process can be achieved by developing a form that appears at the front of the students' file with all the relevant information documented. If feasible, this information should be accessible electronically via a remote system.
- Documentation should exist in each file pertaining to:
 - ✓ Complaints
 - ✓ Important calls
 - ✓ Home visits and Homestay family assessments
 - ✓ Problems
 - ✓ Emergencies
 - ✓ Monitoring procedures
 - ✓ Feedback and evaluations from Homestay parents, students and agents
- Comments, dates and actions taken should be documented on file (hard copy or electronically) in a consistent manner. These documents demonstrate on-going contact and duty of care obligations and are important if required in a legal proceeding.
- A process should be in place so that student files can be linked with the appropriate Homestay family file.
- Students and Homestay families have the legal right to view information collected regarding them. Therefore, it is essential that standardized documentation procedures be consistently used. The files should not contain inappropriate comments or remarks.

14. Homestay Orientation Process:

It is recommended that:

- Orientation sessions for Homestay family should be compulsory and attendance documented on the Homestay family file.
- Orientation sessions should be kept small, with the number of participants being 10 or less.
- Cross-cultural training should be a component of the orientation process and

should be delivered by an expert in this field of study. Cross-cultural training should also be included within the student orientation process.

15. Student Application Process and Background Checks:

Based on the findings of this review, it is recommended that more attention be given to assessing potential international students from a behavioural and mental health perspective. Questions should be included on the student application form to assess the student's mental health status as well as previous criminal behaviours.

Consideration should also be given to advising Homestay parents, in writing, of the program's limitations in screening students. In the Homestay family agreement it should be specified that the program cannot guarantee the character of the student and is not liable for any damages or injuries caused by the Homestay student.

16. Agent Relations:

The School Districts should have a process in place to screen and recruit foreign agents. This should entail meeting the agent face-to-face, requesting a profile of the agent to be kept on file and checking references. It should be noted that the Eastern School District has already implemented such a process.

In addition, when agents are identified, it is imperative that they are thoroughly briefed on the School Districts guidelines, policies and procedures. This will aid in assuring the agents represent the program accurately and adhere to the School District's practices.

17. Ongoing Program Evaluation:

The program should survey all of its stakeholders (students, Homestay families and agents) at the end of each academic year to determine where program improvements are required. The findings from these surveys should be used to revise or improve guidelines and practices.

18. Policies to be Included in Both the Student and Homestay Family Handbooks:

Based on the findings of the cross-jurisdictional review and best practices, guidelines and policies need to be developed relating to the areas identified below. The guidelines and policies identified below are in addition to those already identified in the current draft Guidelines for K-12 International Student Homestay Program. When developed and approved, these items should be communicated to potential and existing students along with the Homestay families. These guidelines should

also be included within both the student and Homestay family handbooks.

- **Curfews.** A consistent curfew should be established by the program for students. The curfews established should take into consideration the student's age and different curfews should be in place for weeknights and weekends. Some programs have set/support a curfew of 10:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday and a 12:00 midnight curfew on Fridays and Saturdays for senior high students.
- **Student Whereabouts.** Homestay students should provide detailed information to their Homestay families as to where they are going, how they can be reached, when they will be back and with whom they are going out. If the student will be later than planned, they are to contact their Homestay family immediately.
- **Sleepovers.** Sleepovers should not be permitted by the International Education Program. If for some reason the Homestay family has to make alternate sleeping arrangements for the student, approval must be granted by the International Student Education Program and details on the student's whereabouts must be documented. Under no circumstance is an international student to remain in the Homestay family home overnight unsupervised.
- **Showering and Bathing.** The length and time of showering/bathing should be established. Other programs have suggested that a reasonable showering time is approximately 10 minutes, as longer showers will drain the hot water tank. This may result in insufficient hot water for other members of the household. Other programs have left this issue for the Homestay family to set, but note it in the handbooks.
- **Telephone Usage.** The rules regarding telephone usage need to be documented. Parameters need to be established for the length and time for receiving and making telephone calls as well as telephone bill payment. Collect calls and calling cards should be recommended. The installation of a second telephone line for the student should be mutually agreed upon by both the Homestay parent and the student, with the student assuming the cost.
- **Internet Access.** Homestay families must be prepared to provide Internet access in their homes. The family cannot charge extra fees for the provision of this service. The program needs to establish parameters for Internet usage and set time guidelines/restrictions. Also guidelines need to be in place to ensure students do not go to inappropriate websites (i.e. sites containing pornographic material or material of immoral or questionable content). It must be made clear that at no time should a student alter, add, delete or create any programs on the Homestay family computer (i.e. change the default language).
- **Clothing.** It should be the responsibility of the international student to purchase/bring appropriate clothing. Students should have the right to their own taste in clothing, but should be required to adhere to the 'appropriate dress' code of the host schools.

- **Part-time Work.** International students may accept honorariums for such activities as babysitting, yard work or snow removal, but are unable to accept a position whereby a social insurance number is required.
- **Religious Beliefs.** Homestay families and students must show mutual respect for one another's religious beliefs. International students should have the right to practice their own religion and Homestay families should make it easy for students to attend religious services. Students may accompany their Homestay parents to religious services, but Homestay families do not have the right to insist they attend such activities.
- **Medical Treatment.** Homestay families should not require authorization to bring an international student to a physician for a routine check-up or for a minor medical problem. A protocol should be in place for more serious medical emergencies, such as that requiring guardian consent. This process needs to be clearly outlined and communicated to the Homestay Coordinators, the students and the Homestay family members.
- **Student Privacy.** All students should have the right to essential privacy in their Homestay family. However, the Homestay family, at their discretion, reserve the right to search any room or item found within their home.
- **Body Piercing and Tattoos.** Guidelines need to be established around body piercing and tattooing. Based on the cross-jurisdictional review, it is recommended that students must receive written permission from their natural parents if they wish to engage in body piercing or tattooing. It should be clearly stated that the Homestay program will not assume any responsibility for medical problems which may arise as a result from these activities.

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Homestay Program Review

Within Canada, international education programs for students in the grade K-12 public school system have been operational for quite some time and have met with a high degree of enthusiasm and success. Most provinces began their programs in the mid to late 1990's, though Ontario and British Columbia have the most extensive experience and together host approximately 75% of the approximately 31,500 (K-12) international students in the country.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the experience is relatively new: the Eastern School District has been recruiting and hosting international students since 2003 with 19 students, while the Western School District began its experience in 2004 with 2 students. Today, the Eastern School District is hosting 61 students and the Western School District is hosting 40 students.

Over time, the school districts and the Department of Education have developed policies, procedures and guidelines to support K-12 international students and their homestay families. However, the authority for ensuring optimal safety and well-being of homestay students is not presently clear and has yet to be tested. The current *Schools Act* is essentially silent on international education within the K-12 system, except for the provision whereby the Minister of Education may set fees for international students who have come to the province for the purpose of attending school (Section 117(b) (ix)) and for school boards to charge fees (Sections 12 (2) (b) and 14 (2)). Thus, the *Schools Act* currently does not provide the Minister with the authority for establishing policy or issuing policy directives, nor does it make specific provision for school district boards to deliver the range of international education programs currently being offered. Apart from academic term placements and the Homestay program, the Eastern and Western School Districts are offering short-term summer programs, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL).

The Department of Education and the school districts now desire a set of robust policies, procedures and guidelines that can be developed and implemented within an appropriate authority for accountability and monitoring. This requires clear articulation of the roles and responsibilities of multiple parties including the Department of Education and the school districts. For the purposes of informing future program policies, practices and guidelines, the Department of Education, engaged Jane Helleur & Associates Inc. in early February 2008 to conduct a review of the Homestay Program. Project goals were established as follows:

The primary goal of this project is to review the homestay component of the international studies program in both the Eastern and Western School Districts for the purposes of informing future program policies, practices and guidelines. This project required:

- A profile of School Districts who actively recruit international students, including an historical review of the number of students recruited and demographic information regarding ages, country of origin, grade level placements and community of residence.
- A review of provincial and School District policies and procedures respecting the Homestay Program.
- A review of all current records/documentation maintained by School Districts and an assessment of the adequacy of these records/documents to ensure appropriate standards are in place.
- A review of the student and host families' recruitment policies, procedures and activities, including the involvement of agents and any other third parties.
- A review of the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, School Districts, agents, Homestay families and parents in the Homestay Program.
- A review of best practices related to Homestay Programs for students who participate in international education, including a cross-jurisdictional analysis of Homestay Programs within K-12 international education in Canada.
- A review and assessment of the approval and supervision policies for Homestay families.
- An assessment of supports provided to Homestay families, natural families and students.
- A review of the role and appropriate qualifications of the Homestay coordinators.
- A determination of any custodian/consent/legal issues which are pertinent.
- Recommendations for international education Homestay Programs, including but not limited to legislative requirements, best practice policies, policy guidelines, and roles and responsibilities of relevant partners.

This report includes the review's key findings and provides a series of conclusions and recommendations derived from these findings. It is intended this report will inform the future development of consistent provincial policies and guidelines for the Homestay Program in terms of recruitment, approval and supervision of homestay families and students. This report proposes the roles and responsibilities for the Department of Education, the school districts, students/natural families and other agencies and/or agents. The recommended policies, procedures, guidelines and legislative requirements presented are in keeping with the provincial government's overall policy objectives and existing financial resources.

Throughout this Homestay Review project, there was an exceptionally high degree of cooperation of personnel from the International Student Education Program in the Eastern and Western School Districts, from the Department of Education and in other provincial

jurisdictions. This bodes well for future mutual efforts to build a best practice environment for the Homestay Program.

1.1. General Description of International Student Education and the Homestay Program

International education in the province spans the Eastern and Western School Districts, the College of the North Atlantic, Memorial University and private training institutions. The Educational Foundation (EF) has been bringing students into the province for the many years and has been working in partnership with the Western School District for the last three years. As a result of this partnership, EF students are now required to pay tuition fees to the Western School District. Taken together, in the 2007/2008 academic year there were 1,324 international students studying in the province and 91 of these students were in secondary-level schools within the Eastern and Western School Districts.

The structure for the governance of the international studies program differs somewhat for the Eastern and Western School Districts. Within the Eastern School District, the Newfoundland International Student Education Program (NISEP) is responsible for overseeing international studies and is governed by its own board of directors. The Western School District has established an International Education Program to recruit students and to manage all aspects of international education in the Western School District. This program was established in partnership with the Humber Education Alliance (HEA) which also had a broader role in post-secondary education. The Western School District and HEA work together to pursue and explore market opportunities. In both school districts, there is a staff resource who provides program oversight (as a significant role in addition to other school board roles) as well as a fulltime program administrator who is responsible for all day-to-day activities.

International education programs offer students from other countries the opportunity to experience a new culture and learn the English language. Introducing international students to classrooms and schools enriches the learning experiences of other students and instils a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and of different practices and beliefs. It allows for the development of long lasting friendships for both international students as well as students in host schools. Host schools receive a payment for each international student that represents an important source of funds to support individual school programming and extracurricular activities. Apart from this direct economic impact for schools, there are other economic benefits in that students are educational tourists and spend money for their subsistence and entertainment. The direct and indirect economic benefits have not been quantified as they are beyond the scope of this review.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the International Student Education Program is offered throughout the K-12 grade levels. However, the vast majority of international students avail of the junior high or high school curriculum. Elementary students are accepted into the program, but only if they are accompanied by a parent or chaperone. Currently, 42 of the 61 students in grades K-12 within the Eastern School District participate in the Homestay Program and in the Western School district, 40 of the 43 students in the K-12 system participate in the Homestay Program.

The Homestay component of the International Education Program has been designed to extend students' opportunities to experience the province's culture firsthand, hone their English skills, and to provide a secure living environment for students under the age of majority. International students are matched with families of similar likes and interests and are included in the day-to-day living and recreational activities of the household. This matching process is facilitated by Homestay Coordinators who conduct the initial Homestay family assessment and monitor both the student's and family's experience throughout the academic school year. Homestay students are provided with a room in the host family's home which consists of a bed with linens, dresser, desk and towels and share the common areas of the home. The host family is required to provide the student with three meals a day, seven days a week. Host families are paid a monthly allowance of \$500-\$560 to offset the cost of hosting an international student.

1.2.Recent Review and Policy Initiatives

In 2007, draft Guidelines for the K-12 International Student Homestay Program were developed by the Department of Education, but with the input of the Eastern and Western School Districts. These (undated) draft guidelines address:

- Program administration and fees;
- Documentation and record keeping;
- Student and Homestay family orientation;
- Student evaluation and progress reports, including high school graduation and other details; and
- Information to be provided to host schools and related communication.

Particularly relevant to this current Homestay Review, are the specific guidelines that address:

- Homestay approval;
- Placement and placement changes;
- Homestay fees;

- Student finances;
- Student safety, behaviour and discipline;
- Student travel;
- School holidays such as Easter and Christmas;
- Student driving; and
- Length of stay.

The draft guidelines also highlight the need for additional consultation regarding several important areas such as:

- The qualifications of Homestay Coordinators. The draft guidelines indicate Homestay Coordinators must possess a Bachelor of Social Work degree and have experience in conducting household inspections as a component of assessing the suitability for child placements;
- The custodianship and Homestay parental responsibility; and
- The requirement of Homestay families for proper liability insurance.

At the request of the Department of Education, in late November 2007, the Director of Child and Youth Services, Department of Health and Community Services, submitted a report detailing her review of the draft Guidelines. This review made a number of recommendations to strengthen policies and processes in the areas of Homestay family approval, reference checks, Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) checks, Homestay agreement and terms and conditions, student and Homestay family orientation, approval/refusal of Homestay families, communication and contact to students and their Homestay families, placement changes, student behaviour/discipline, student safety, documentation, and general implementation and monitoring of the guidelines when revised and approved.

Again, at the request of the Department of Education, in late 2007 the Director of Child and Youth Services and the Manager of CYFS Division were asked to conduct a file review of the Homestay program for the Eastern and Western School Districts. The file review was based upon the unimplemented draft guidelines and the report was submitted on December 20th, 2007. The report identified significant lack of documentation in both School Districts, the absence of recording standards and inconsistencies for application processes, the absence of background checks and assessments on Homestay families, and weaknesses in communication linkages between the Homestay Program and host schools and between the Program and Homestay families. Weak and/or nonexistent linkages between student and Homestay families were also noted.

Since these two reports, the Eastern and Western School Districts have implemented criminal records checks and CYFS checks. However, there are continuing difficulties in

receiving timely CYFS checks and with the level of fully informed consent being obtained from Homestay families for these checks, especially for the Eastern School District. Greater attention has been paid to file integrity and documentation, most notably and admirably in the Eastern School District. Further comment regarding the entire assessment, monitoring, documentation and other Homestay Program processes are detailed throughout this report.

2.0 Project Methodology

To meet the objectives of the Homestay Program Review, several data collection methods were undertaken. These are further described below.

2.1. Interviews with School District Personnel

In total, 5 interviews were conducted with school district representatives: 3 interviews were conducted with representatives of the Eastern School District and 2 interviews with representatives of the Western School District. These in-person interviews were conducted between March 13 to April 2, 2008 and with interview time ranging from 1 to 3 hours.

In addition, all 7 Homestay Coordinators were interviewed. Interviews were conducted from March 11 to April 30, 2008. Each interview lasted an average of 1.5 hours. Interviews were conducted both in-person and by phone. The interview protocols for the school district personnel and Homestay Coordinators can be found in Appendix A.

2.2. Student Focus Groups

Mini-focus groups (2-5 participants) were conducted to obtain the input of international students currently enrolled in the Homestay Program in both school districts. Student focus groups were conducted at both the senior and junior high levels at the host schools during school hours. The Table 1 below provides a summary of the location of the focus groups and the number of students in attendance. Student focus groups were one hour in duration and light refreshments were provided.

Student focus groups were conducted between March 11 and March 20, 2008. The student focus group guide can be found in Appendix B.

Table 1 Homestay Student Focus Groups Location and Number of Students		
	School District	# Students in Group
Elwood High	Western	3
Corner Brook High	Western	4
Presentation Junior High	Western	3
Pasadena Academy	Western	3
Booth Memorial	Eastern	5
Mount Pearl Senior High	Eastern	4
Bay Roberts Amalgamated	Eastern	2
TOTAL		24

2.3. Homestay Family Focus Groups and Natural Family Contact

A focus group with current Homestay families was conducted in both school districts. The Family focus groups were conducted in the evening hours and were two hours in duration. Four Homestay families attended the focus group in the Western School District on March 11, 2008 and 8 families attended the focus group in the Eastern School District on April 2, 2008. Light refreshments were served. The family focus group guide can be found in Appendix C.

In addition to seeking the input of the Homestay families, an attempt was made to ascertain the views and experiences of the natural families. The language barrier prohibited most natural parents from participating in this process. However, one natural parent responded to the invitation extended to participate in this review and provided detailed responses to an email questionnaire. This family's views have been incorporated into this report.

2.4. School District Document Review and File Audit

A file review was conducted on 24 Homestay student files and their corresponding Homestay family files. This review entailed the random selection of 12 Homestay student files from each of the two school districts and was conducted on-site by the consultant team in the Western School District on May 6th 2008 and in the Eastern School District on

May 8th, 2008. The process consisted of selecting the Homestay student file followed by the corresponding Homestay file or files.

The checklists developed by the Director of International Education, the Director of Children and Youth Services and the Manager of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) Division at the Department of Health and Community Services for the file review conducted in 2007 served as the primary basis for the consultant's file review. These checklists were originally designed in accordance with the policy/guidelines document for the Homestay Program for the province. These checklists were further refined to include the best practice identified in the cross-jurisdictional review. The student checklist consisted of 38 items and the Homestay family consisted of 21 items.

Three answer categories were included on the checklist: yes, no and not applicable. Where the information indicated on the checklist was in the file, yes was checked. If the information indicated on the checklist was not in the file, the consultants could only conclude it was not completed (not whether it was actually done and just not documented). For example, many of the Homestay family files in the Western School District contained a copy of the family Homestay Handbook. However, there was no indication the Homestay family actually received the Handbook. Lastly, if an item was not applicable to the student or family file, the not applicable boxed was checked. A copy of the checklists used for the student and Homestay family files can be found in Appendix D.

Of the 24 student files selected for both school districts, four students had moved from their original Homestay family (three in Western School District and one in Eastern School District). Thus, there were 28 Homestay family files reviewed in total. Each consultant recorded detailed notes for each of the Homestay and student files.

2.5. Agents

The program coordinators for international education in each School District contacted two agents each and informed them of this review and invited them to participate. These agents were selected out of 11 agents in total (5 in the Eastern School District and 6 in the Western School District). An email was sent to the selected agents. The email contained the questions and areas of interest of the review. The agents were provided with options of providing their responses via telephone or electronically. Three of the four emailed their responses to the consultant. A list of the questions and areas of interests can be found in Appendix E.

2.6.Provincial Government and Regional Health Authorities

Interviews were conducted with provincial government officials from the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Community Services, Child Youth and Family Services Division. Interviews were also conducted with Regional Director and/or Vice President of CYFS representatives of Western and Eastern Health. Interviews were conducted both in-person and over the phone and lasted on average, 30-45 minutes. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix F.

2.7.Law Enforcement Agencies

Representatives from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were contacted by telephone. This contact was initiated to gain a better understanding of the depth of the criminal records check process and its limitations.

2.8.Cross-jurisdictional Review

The cross-jurisdictional review consisted of two parts. Part I consisted of identifying and conducting in-depth interviews with individuals involved with international education in other provinces at the Ministry of Education level and at the school district level. In total, nine interviews were conducted with each interview requiring 30-45 minutes to complete. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix G.

Part II of the cross-jurisdictional review involved an internet search to identify best practices and policies for international education, both nationally and internationally.

3.0 Key Findings

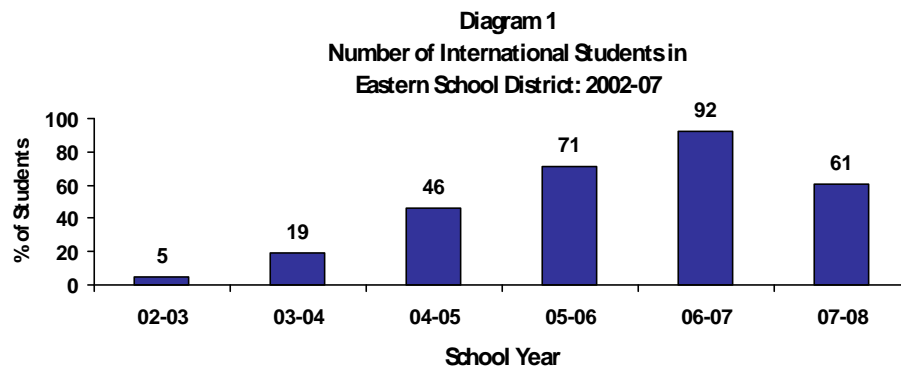
3.1. Demographic Profiles

International education is a growing area with students coming from a wide range of countries, most notably Korea and Mexico.

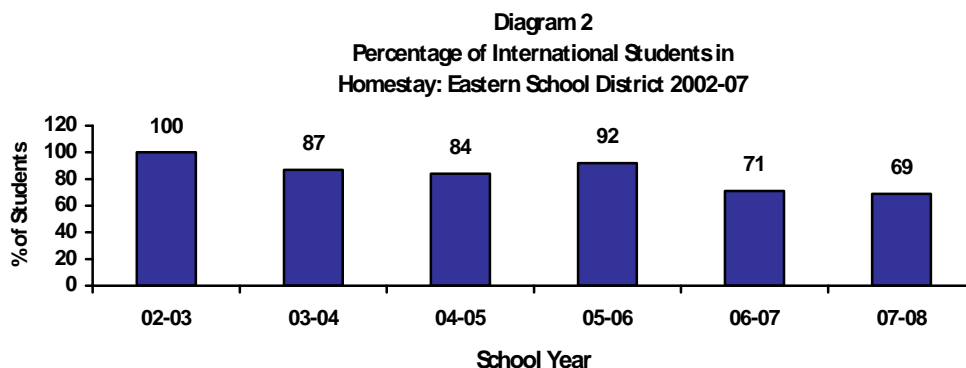
The international education programs in both School Districts have enjoyed sustained growth. For both Districts, the majority of students come from Korea and Mexico and enter level I or level II of the high school program.

Eastern School District

As shown in Diagram 1, from 2002 to 2006, the Eastern School District experienced a growth in its international student's year over year. Despite a decline in growth in 2007, the number of international students is notable and future growth is anticipated for the upcoming school year.

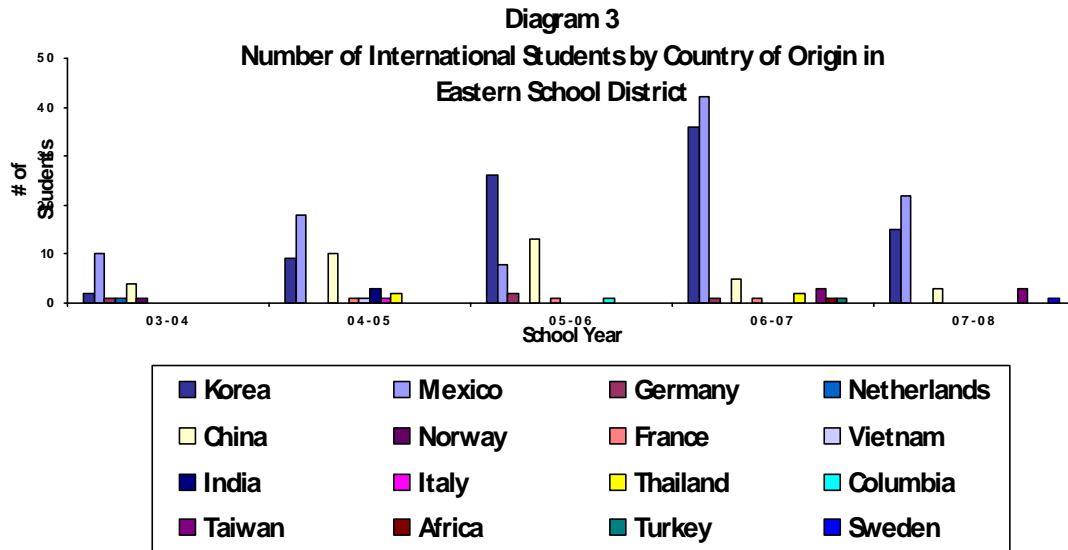


The number of students reported in Diagram 1 refers to students who attend the full academic year along with those who attend only one semester.



As can be seen from Diagram 2, since 2003-04, the percentage of Homestay students has declined notably from 100 percent to 69 percent for the current academic year.

International students come from a variety of countries. Despite the variation, the majority of students arrive from Korea and Mexico, followed distantly by China.



Students range in age from 13 to 19 years, with the average age being 16-17 years. Of the 47 international students actively enrolled in the Eastern School District at the time of this report, the majority (35 students) were participating in the senior high school program.

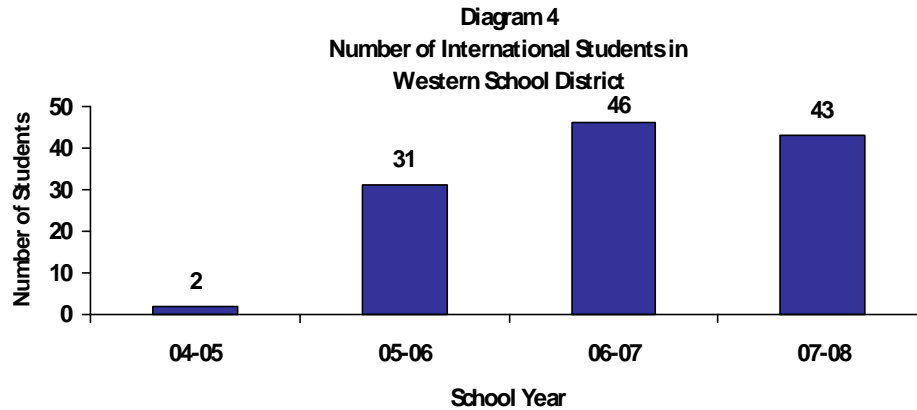
For 2007/08, there are more male international students (30) than females (17). Demographic data was not available for earlier years.

Currently, the Eastern School District has more Homestay families than students with 36 families hosting 42 students. It should be noted that of the 61 students in the International Education, some attend only one semester and others the full academic year. Thus, some Homestay families may have multiple students and some for varying periods of time. There are 4 approved Homestay families currently without students and another 5 families who are in the process of updating their files. Approximately 80% of the families have been involved with the program since its inception. Three new families joined the program this academic year.

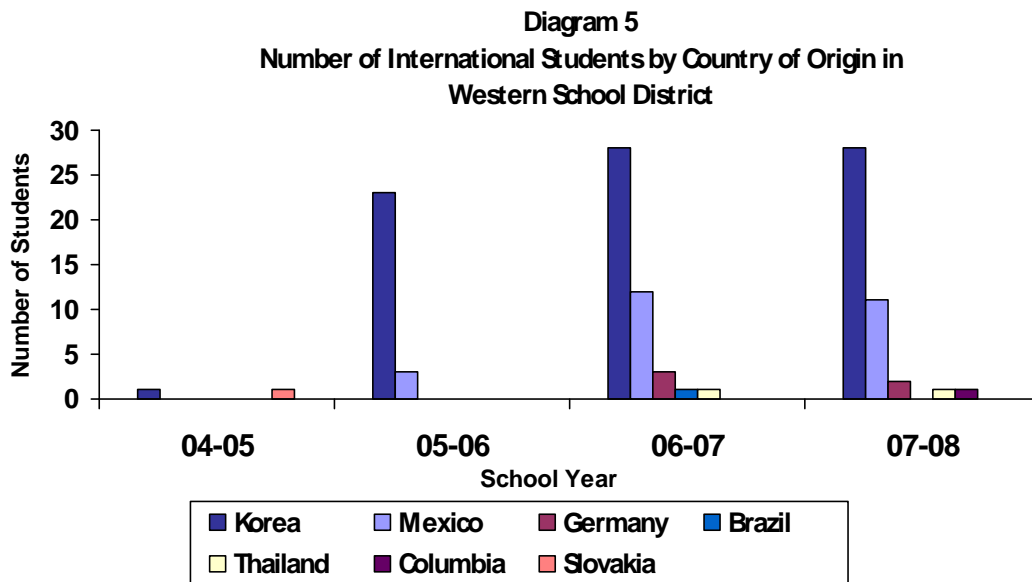
For the current academic year, there have been 10 Homestay moves. Two of the 10 moves were students moving from the Bay Roberts area to St. John's. The remaining eight moves occurred as a result of student and/or family requests unrelated to geographic location.

Western School District

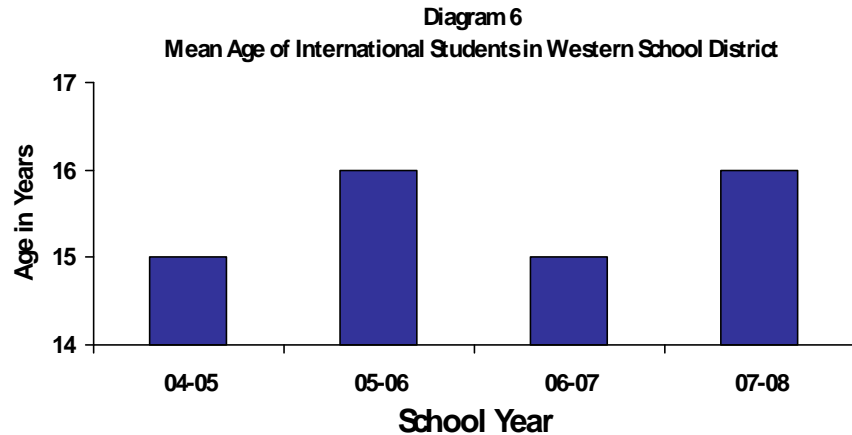
Consistent with the Eastern School District, the number of international students in the Western School District has increased dramatically over the last four years, with by far the majority, 40 out of 43 (93%) students participating in the Homestay Program in the current academic year.



As can be seen from the diagram below, the majority of students continue to arrive from Korea, followed by Mexico.

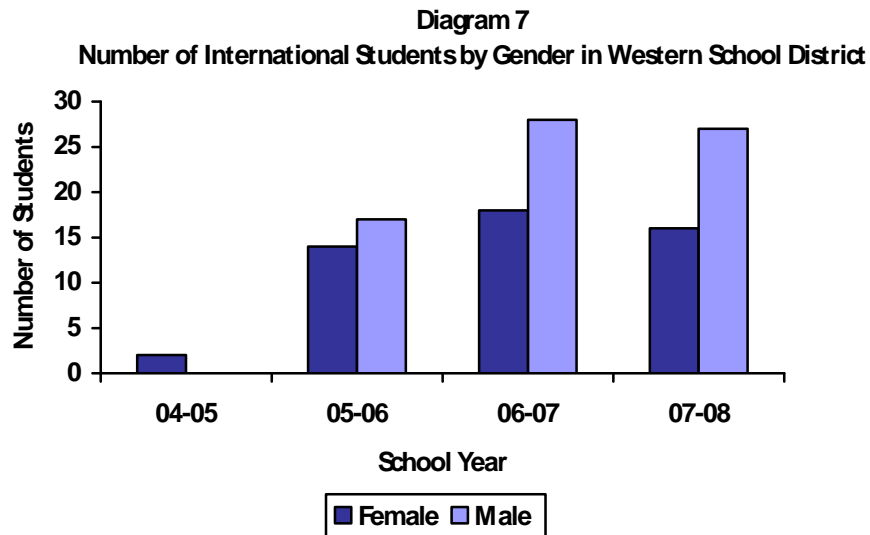


The average age of students coming to the Western School District has remained stable at 15 to 16 years of age. This means the majority of students have been placed in either level I or level II high school programs.



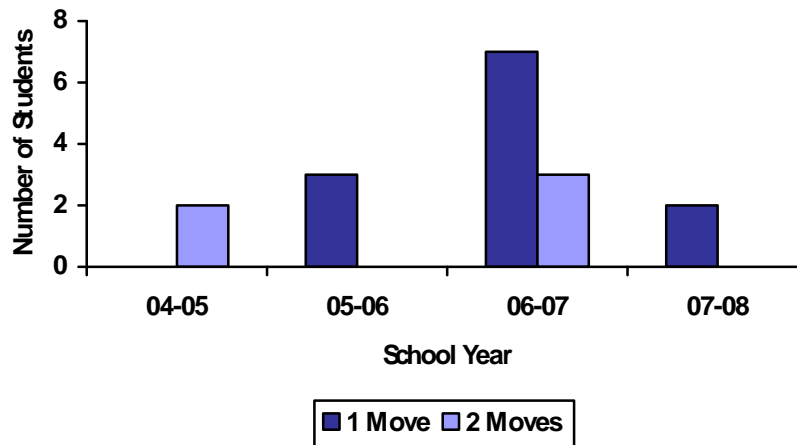
It merits mention for the current school year, 26% of the international students have been placed in Grade 8 and are 14 years old. It is uncertain that this experience will emerge as a continuing trend, but could point to the need for additional Homestay support for these younger adolescents.

Over the last 3 years, the number of male students has exceeded that of females.



For the most part, the overwhelming majority of students do not require or request to be moved from their initial Homestay Family. Among those who do require movement, the majority move once, while the minority require yet an additional move. No more than 2 moves were observed for any one student and the majority of these moves occurred in 2006-07 where 3 students eventually lived with 3 different Homestay families.

Diagram 8
Number of Homestay Moves in
Western School District



3.2. Cross-Jurisdictional Review

Homestay programs across the country are facing many of the same challenges and growing pains.

International education programs are a thriving enterprise across the country, but like any enterprise, the rewards must outweigh the risks. Among the strengths identified by other jurisdictional school board personnel are the continuity and dedication of staff, the rapport they are able to establish with Homestay families, the selection process for exceptional Homestay families, and the low Homestay family turnover that has occurred as a result. Despite these positive attributes, there is always difficulty in finding sufficient and suitable Homestay families and in working through the challenges associated in dealing with adolescents who are now living in a new and different culture and without the direct supervision of their own natural parents.

Accountability

Similar to this province, other provincial Ministries of Education do not play a significant role in the management of international education or in the day-to-day management and operations of the Homestay program. These Ministries of Education have no legal authority and act primarily in an advisory capacity. None of the Ministries has the legal ability to enforce policy or guidelines relating to international education and Homestay programs.

In all provinces, international education is the mandate of the school boards or districts.

As would be expected, different school districts have evolved their international education programs in various directions, with most being heavily influenced by market demand, capacity to accommodate international students (availability of Homestay families) and available resources.

Many school districts have formed associations such as the International Public School Education Association of British Columbia (IPSEA) and the Nova Scotia International Student Program (NSISP). The Canadian Association of Public Schools – International (CAPS-I) is also a relatively new organization with a strong focus on Homestay programs. These associations are comprised of school districts or boards actively involved with international education. They come together as a group to develop and establish guidelines and policies for international education. These organizations have no legal authority to enforce the policies and guidelines they create. Rather, it is the responsibility of the individual school districts to accept, adopt and/or enforce policies and guidelines. Overall, it was felt the districts involved do a good job of policing themselves and have developed a sense of collegiality and mutual accountability.

Guardianship

For the most part, school districts accept responsibility of legal guardianship and liability for all international students. This is reflective of their desire to play an active role in all aspects of international student education and Homestay programming. This is by far the prevalent approach to guardianship of international students throughout Canada.

However, it merits mention that some school districts, especially those in British Columbia and several in Ontario, have been advised by their legal counsels not to accept this legal guardianship. In these cases, the Homestay parent, a private international student/Homestay agency, or other community guardian accepts this responsibility. In Prince Edward Island, the Ministry of Education directly establishes contractual arrangements with private agencies to recruit and place international students in schools and Homestay families. Here again, it is the agency that accepts responsibility for legal guardianship.

Selection and Recruitment of Homestay Families

Homestay coordinators are key components of Homestay programs in other jurisdictions and are responsible for screening, selecting and monitoring the Homestay families and the students. These coordinators are seen as having a critical role in the success of the Homestay program. Many of the international education programs across the country

attribute their success to the skills and abilities of their Homestay coordinators and the close working relationships they have established with the Homestay families and students.

Most programs use a variety of family recruitment strategies, with word-of-mouth and referrals from existing Homestay families being cited as yielding the greatest return.

The initial step with all programs is the completion of a written application form followed by a home visit and inspection. The level of information required in the application varies, but the common items include:

- Applicant contact information including:
 - ✓ Name
 - ✓ Mailing address
 - ✓ Work and home telephone numbers of parents
 - ✓ Email addresses
 - ✓ Gender
 - ✓ Date of birth
 - ✓ Marital status
- List of all permanent household residents including:
 - ✓ Relationship to applicant
 - ✓ Date of birth
 - ✓ Occupation
 - ✓ Gender
- Smoking habits of household residents and willingness to accommodate students who smoke
- Languages other than English spoken in the home
- List of household pets
- Number of times hosting international students
- Criminal convictions
- Dwelling description
 - ✓ Presence or absence of liability insurance
 - ✓ Whether the dwelling is owned or rented
 - ✓ Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- Rationale/desire for wanting to be a Homestay family

All Homestay applications include a disclaimer or declaration statement at the end of the application form. This statement varies from program to program, but typically addresses the accuracy of the information provided and the ramifications of providing false

information or documentation.

Other programs go a step further and require Homestay families to sign a waiver and/or code of conduct as part of the application. In most cases, signing the waiver signifies the Homestay family agrees the school district is not liable for any loss or damages caused by the hosted international student(s). Generally, Homestay families only have to indicate that liability insurance is in place, but some districts are beginning to request written confirmation from the insurance provider to ensure the prospective Homestay family has the amount of insurance required. Similarly, some school districts require a signed waiver indicating the Homestay family has adequate liability insurance in place to protect against any loss or damage caused by the international students.

Some programs require Homestay families to read and sign a code of conduct. The code of conduct is a policy document that details the actions and practices that have been agreed to by all parties. It is felt that a code of conduct improves the rigour of the program and serves to mitigate legal risks. Items addressed in codes of conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Immediate notification of change in household composition
- Notification required to terminate/evict a Homestay student
- Payment schedules
- Complaint process
- Privacy of the student
- School attendance and reports
- Sleepovers
- Student length of stay
- Internet and telephone access and usage
- Basic requirements such as meals
- Medical emergency procedures
- Grounds for immediate student termination (drug and alcohol usage)
- Grounds for immediate Homestay family termination
- Driving restrictions for students
- Behaviour standards and curfews
- Student travel
- Custodianship
- Healthcare insurance

School districts are moving towards having a written legally binding contract in place with their Homestay families. These contracts increase the programs' credibility and protect the rights of both the school district and the Homestay family.

Criminal and child abuse registry checks as well as personal references are also required. Most programs require the applicant to submit three personal references. In some jurisdictions one of the three references must be a 'community leader' (i.e., clergy, teacher, nurse, physician). The Eastern School District has also recently implemented this practice. In Nova Scotia the principal of the host school is now required to provide an assessment of the family's ability to host international students and their previous working relationship with the school.

Other jurisdictions generally use a standardized reference check form to conduct the reference checks. The information collected through the reference checks is documented, including date and signature and placed in the Homestay family file.

The Homestay family home interview and inspection generally occurs simultaneously. Most school districts use a standardized interview with prospective Homestay families and request all household members be present. The purpose of this interview is to assess a family's motivation and suitability as a Homestay family. The home inspection typically consists of viewing the private sleeping quarters for the student as well as the common household areas. Most programs require the student have their own room with a minimum of a bed, dresser, desk, chair and reading lamp. The student is expected to share bathroom facilities with the other household members as well as other common areas.

In *"International Programs: Rewards and Risks"* an article prepared by Barbara Webster-Evans for the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law and Education (CAPSLE, April 2007), the importance of querying the family regarding any issues that might impede the household's ability to host an international student such as marital discord, alcohol or drug use, mental health issues or behavioural problems of residents is explored. A point emphasized is the importance of documenting and preserving all aspects of the screening and selection processes.

Most programs conduct criminal and child abuse registry checks on all household members 18 years of age and older.

Selecting International Students

The majority of programs in other jurisdictions have placed more emphasis on the Homestay family selection process than on the student selection process. The CAPSLE article notes the importance of selecting the right student. To date, most programs inquire about the student's educational achievements and aspirations, but fail to adequately assess

any potential behavioural problems, medical conditions and/or previous criminal encounters. Thus, the article recommends more thorough background checks of the student prior to acceptance into an international education program.

The following features are generally included in the student application process:

- Clear statement on the application form that any inaccuracy of information is grounds for student dismissal from the program and at the student's expense. Both the student and the parent sign the application and attest to its accuracy and supporting documents.
- Clear signed statement that the student has read the code of conduct and that he/she understands that failure to adhere represents grounds for termination from the program. A code of conduct is appended to the student application.
- Clear statement that the school district is not legally liable should the student become injured while studying in Canada.
- Signed waiver for all future claims and an indemnity from the student and the family.
- Notification and signed agreement that any litigation involving the international education program must occur within the province of the program.

Medical Emergencies

Homestay parents do not require any special authorization to accompany their Homestay student to a medical appointment or check-up. In the case of a medical emergency, most programs instruct the Homestay parents to seek medical treatment and immediately contact the designated individual at the school district or international education program. In several jurisdictions, it is clearly stated that the Homestay parents are not to contact the natural parents as this is the responsibility of the program's staff. Sample wording is as follows:

'If the international student must undergo any type of surgery, the Homestay Host family must contact the Canadian Custodian immediately. If the international student is injured in a car or traffic accident, we ask the Homestay Host family and the international student not to sign any form discharging the parties of responsibility, and forward names of the people to the Canadian Custodian immediately. In case of a serious emergency or an accident, the Canadian Custodian and Turtle Mountain School Division personnel must be contacted before the biological parents. The international student and Homestay Host family can count on us for support and comfort.'

(Excerpt from Turtle Mountain School Division, International Education Program
Homestay Guide, Manitoba, undated)

Frequency of Contact and Reporting

The type and amount of contact the Homestay coordinators have with their student varies from program to program. At a minimum, most programs require at least some type of contact with the student and/or family on a monthly basis. As might be expected, in larger urban areas this type of contact is more likely not to be face-to-face, but rather via telephone or email. Best practices indicate that Homestay coordinators meet with their students outside of their Homestay, such as at school or elsewhere. Students who are experiencing difficulties with their Homestay family might not feel comfortable or may be unwilling to discuss such issues within their Homestay home. All contact is documented and dated and placed in the student file.

The *Guide to Providing Homestay in Queensland* (2006) represents a best practice approach to many elements of Homestay programs, including monitoring for families and students. The guide notes that monitoring can be accomplished through a variety of means including:

- Periodic monitoring through surveys of students and families;
- Regular phone calls;
- Informal meetings with students;
- Discussions with the student's teachers and tutors;
- Regular home visits, with clear policy regarding what regular means, whether once a semester or monthly; and
- Homestay families at organized workshops.

The above Guide also notes that when completing home visits, staff should:

- Prearrange suitable times, unless there is a safety concern in which case a visit should be undertaken on a priority basis;
- Predetermine what is to be accomplished; and
- Stay alert to warning signs such as repeated attempts of the Homestay family to be available, noticeable changes to the home or home situation, possible signs or symptoms of student stress, and/or unease in communications, especially with the student in the presence of the Homestay family members.

Finally, the Guide emphasizes the importance of proper documentation, including documentation of comments, dates and actions taken. The documentation should occur in a consistent manner and in a way that demonstrates on-going contact and that duty of care obligations are met. These are critical documentation requirements in the event that legal

proceedings occur. The frequency and standards for documentation should be transparent and communicated to Homestay families and students.

Moving Homestay Students

The Canadian cross-jurisdictional review did not reveal best practices to guide Homestay student moves. While Homestay program administrators do their best to create compatible matches, they are sometimes not successful. When a student must be moved for either safety or compatibility issues, Homestay coordinators have a process that must be followed. For the most part, this entails documenting the reasons for the move, identifying a new Homestay family and facilitating the introduction and adjustment. In some cases, there is a requirement that the student be accompanied by the Homestay coordinator for the initial meeting, and in other cases, care is taken to ensure the old and new Homestay families do not meet.

Nova Scotia has just implemented a policy whereby if the move is not warranted for safety or security reasons, then the student must pay a fee. It is also recommended that there be a limit on the number of moves a student can make.

Qualifications of Homestay Coordinators

As previously noted, the Homestay coordinators play a vital role in the screening, selection and ongoing monitoring of Homestay families. In more recently established programs with smaller student numbers, Homestay coordinators are paid on a per student basis per month. This is the model being used by both the Eastern and Western School Districts. In British Columbia, school districts are starting to hire their coordinators on a per semester basis in response to the large international student base.

Other jurisdictions noted the Homestay coordinators are the lowest paid personnel involved with international education programs, but yet have the greatest amount of 'hands-on' contact with the families and students. If an issue or crisis arises, they will be the first line of defence and need to respond in a safe and responsible manner. The challenge across the country is attracting people with the right skill set to these positions.

The ideal Homestay coordinator should possess strong assessment skills as well as negotiation and problem-solving abilities. They must be comfortable working with youth and respect cultural diversity. This skill set typically comes from having a degree or training in the fields of social sciences, education or the humanities. However, procuring this skill set in competitive labour markets is a continuing challenge.

Some programs have been able to attract Homestay coordinators with social work degrees. These program representatives highlight the value and creditability such professionals bring to the Homestay program. Similarly, others have hired retired teachers and counsellors who have also brought valuable experience to the program.

Other programs have hired existing or former Homestay parents as coordinators. While these individuals are well versed with Homestay challenges, it was noted they may lack the required assessment and problem solving abilities to screen and monitor other Homestay families. Many may not have the skills to ensure that the processes carried out are validated and documented from a risk management perspective.

The Queensland Guide and the CAPSLE article also note that students should not be placed with Homestay staff or program staff. Students in these situations might be reluctant to raise problems or issues about their Homestay family in the absence of an objective third party to approach.

3.3. School District Personnel and Practices

Homestay Coordinators

Homestay Coordinators play a pivotal role in the screening, selection and ongoing monitoring of Homestay families and require strong assessment and documentation skills.

In both school districts, the Homestay coordinators facilitate the relationships between the families, the students and the school districts. No position and role description exists in the School Districts for the Homestay coordinators, though it is understood they are responsible for:

- Conducting an in-person interview with the Homestay family with all household members present;
- Ensuring all household members 18 and older have submitted to the criminal background and CYFS checks;
- Conducting a home inspection;
- Conducting monthly visits with the students and Homestay family members.
- Submitting monthly written reports;
- Submitting incident reports when required;
- Developing and monitoring behavioural contracts when required;
- Being available to Homestay families and students on a 24/7 basis; and
- Coordinating Homestay moves and documenting the rationale behind the move

and the process employed.

When a student is placed with a family, the coordinators are required to visit the student and the family at a minimum of once a month. This monthly contact is intended to be face-to-face, but it is evident both from the interviews with Homestay staff, students, Homestay parents as well as from the file review that this is not occurring on a regular basis, most notably in the Western School District. Frequently, the contact is via telephone and in the Western School District less frequently than monthly. In the Western School District, it appears that familiarity and trust in some Homestay families translates into less frequent contact. However, it merits mention, that when a Homestay family or student is dealing with a given challenge or issue, contact increases to the level required to address the challenge in an appropriate manner.

The Homestay coordinators are also responsible for checking the potential Homestay family references. Recently, the Eastern School District has implemented a standardized reference checking process, including a stipulation that one of the three references must be a community leader (police, educator, clergy, etc). When the references are checked, a copy of the completed reference form is signed and dated by the coordinator and placed on the Homestay family's file.

Homestay coordinators are paid \$60 a student per month. This level of remuneration was viewed by both School Districts as being insufficient given the responsibility and duties of these individuals. The low remuneration was seen as a limiting factor in recruiting coordinators with the desired educational background. However, both School Districts believe that the requirement of a social work degree for Homestay coordinators is cost prohibitive and would greatly compromise the program's financial feasibility.

The School Districts acknowledge greater emphasis is required for the professional development and continuing education of Homestay coordinators and the need for position descriptions. As well, the School Districts do not have formal contracts with the Homestay coordinators. Both School Districts acknowledge this is an area that requires immediate attention. It was also acknowledged that Homestay coordinators should have some post-secondary training, for example a college diploma or course work in the social science field. Retired professionals (i.e., councillors, social workers, teachers, and clergy) were also identified as possible candidates.

3.4. Homestay Families

Homestay families require a significant amount of support from the Homestay coordinator and need to be fully briefed on their roles and responsibilities.

Referrals from existing Homestay families along with word-of-mouth have been the most effective means in both school districts to attract more families to the Homestay program. Homestay families are expected to:

- Provide the international student with their own private bedroom which is to include a bed, a dresser, a desk and adequate lighting;
- Three meals a day;
- Access to the common areas of the home (i.e., bathroom, kitchen, family room); and
- Include the student within all household activities.

As previously indicated, potential Homestay families must complete a written application form, agree to criminal and CYFS checks, participate in an interview and submit to a home inspection. Homestay families are also expected to attend an orientation session. Up until recently, attendance at this session was optional, but is now mandatory in both School Districts.

In both Districts, the Homestay orientation session is approximately a two-hour session that is typically held during the evening hours. The session outlines the duties and obligations of the Homestay family and also addresses some of the cultural challenges that may arise. One School District representative noted that more focused cross-cultural training is required to assist families better understand the cultural norms of the students they are hosting. It was also recommended that this training be offered by a third independent party and not school district personnel. Such training was also seen as being beneficial for students, but in a separate setting from the Homestay families.

Currently, the School Districts do not have a contractual agreement in place with Homestay families. As well, it appears there is pervasive confusion about which School District representative to contact for various purposes, such as medical emergencies and critical incidents. There is no evidence in either of the School Districts that a contact sheet (with alternate contact names and telephone numbers) is provided to Homestay families.

3.5. Guardianship

There is considerable confusion over guardianship and clear policies and procedures are necessary to address this issue.

The guardian for international students in the Homestay program is assumed by a School District staff member. For the current academic year, the guardian in the Western School District is the Itinerant for Outdoor Education/International Education. For the Eastern School District the guardian is the individual who previously occupied the position of Assistant Director of Education, Rural and Corporate Services and though no longer in the position, the individual still remains as the legal guardian.

Several points were raised about the issue of guardianship that warrant highlighting. The guardian needs to be accessible 24/7 and challenges arise when the guardian is travelling outside the region or cannot be physically present in the event of an emergency. It was suggested a hierarchical structure may be required that enables an alternate in the event the guardian cannot be reached. Having the guardianship tied to a role versus a person was also suggested. Legal advice is required to assess the implications of this alternative.

3.6. Agent Relations

Agents act as the 'go between' for students and their natural family with the international education program.

The program directors in each school districts work closely with the agents. Communication with natural families occurs primarily through agents. However, there appears to be some differences in that some Mexican parents may contact the school district directly whereas Korean parents direct communication through agents, primarily because of the language barriers.

Agents are contacted if:

- A student receives bad grades;
- There are issues with the Homestay family or student;
- Medical reasons or emergencies
- A student misses/skips school; or
- A student wants to travel outside the province (forms have to be signed by natural parents).

It was noted the agent works on the student's behalf and at times only hears the student's

version of what has transpired. The program director has to work with the agent to ensure they receive all the relevant information before action is taken.

The agents provide students with information on the province and are also responsible for forwarding information about students' Homestay families prior to students' arrival in the province. There is some concern that not all agents are providing accurate and/or timely information to the students. Thus, there is a recognized need to work closely with the agents to ensure the information pertaining to the province and the Homestay family is accurate and being relayed in a timely manner.

Agents also receive monthly progress reports for each student as well as a copy of their transcript in accordance with the reporting schedules throughout the school year.

It also merits mention that the Eastern School District has developed a process for selecting its agents. Each agent that works with this school district must meet in-person with the district's staff, provide a profile of their firm, which remains on file and submit three references. This is reflective of a best practice identified in the CAPSLE article.

3.7. Matching Process

The more information provided by the student and the Homestay family, the more successful the matching process is likely to be.

Matching of students with Homestay families is completed on the basis of the program's staff's knowledge of the families and the information provided in the student application. Mexican students entering the program participate in an interview with their agent. The information gathered through this interview process, makes it somewhat easier to place Mexican students. In contrast, Korean students write a letter to their potential Homestay family. The information contained in this letter forms the basis of the match. Staff attempt to match student with families who have similar interests. However, there is evidence that the limited availability of host families, especially in the Western School District, means matches based on interests and preferences are not always possible. In addition, both School Districts attempt to place students throughout their region as a means of achieving an urban/rural balance which does not always meet student preferences and needs.

In the Eastern School District, Homestay families who have no children of their own are encouraged to take two students of the same sex, but from different cultures. Both Districts do not place students in a Homestay family where there is a family member of the same sex and age as a student, and for the Eastern School District, this restriction is

extended to a 3-year age difference. However, these practices are not documented for either School District. The Western School District has a written statement that a single parent may not host an opposite sex student, though exceptions to this were observed. However, it should be noted that no such similar policy exists for foster families in the province and such placements are the result of thorough professional assessment. No evidence of such an assessment process was available in either of the School Districts. However, both School Districts' personnel had difficulty addressing the hypothetical situation of a single male hosting a female student. More specifically, even if all the checks and references were satisfactory, both Districts would have difficulty placing a female student with a single male. This is an area where clear guidelines are warranted.

Several of the Homestay coordinators have recently had the opportunity to meet students in their home countries prior to the matching process taking place. This was seen as having tremendous value in directly addressing expectations and in facilitating a good match.

3.8. Student Application Forms and Checks

Neither of the school districts is currently conducting student background checks.

Neither of the school districts conducts student background checks. Students are required to submit their completed application forms, their most recent school transcript, a letter to the host family, two passport photos, photos of themselves with family and friends, the application fee and participation terms signed by the natural parent/guardian. The Western school district also requires students to submit a photocopy of their passport. No information is collected during the application process pertaining to any behavioural or mental health issues. This is an area that merits further exploration. The CAPSLE article also recommends that criminal checks be provided by students as part of their application process. Homestay family focus group participants also identified this as being desirable.

3.9. Draft Guidelines for International Student Education Program (K-12)

The Department of Education and the school districts must work together to finalize the currently drafted Guidelines.

School District personnel felt the draft guidelines for the International Student Education Program (K-12) were a step in the right direction for improving management and operational rigor for the International Student Education Program and the Homestay Program component. Key ingredients identified for implementation success were

consistent application of the guidelines in both School Districts and alignment between provincial policy and that of the School Districts.

It was agreed the School Districts and the Department of Education need to work together to refine several elements of the guidelines, most notably the educational qualifications of the Homestay coordinators. Similarly, a need for guidelines and policy regarding jurisdictional autonomy, accountability and reporting are required as well as clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education and the School Districts.

3.10. Student Focus Groups

While most students were generally pleased with their initial Homestay match, they would have liked more detailed and advance information about their host family.

Overall, students are having positive experiences with the International Student Education Program and their Homestay families. Most student report a good 'fit' or 'match' with their Homestay family. In those few cases where students did not feel they were well-matched, lack of similar interests, the presence of small children in the home, and being geographically isolated from peers, most notably those of the same nationality were cited as the reasons. Several students noted that while Homestay families have some say in the student they receive, this same choice is not extended to them. Clearly, some students would like to have more choice in the decision-making process for matching.

The favourable features of the Homestay Program identified by students included:

- Emotional support from Homestay family members
- Learning a new culture and language
- Sharing one's own culture and traditions
- Meeting new people
- Engaging in new activities such as skiing, ski-dooing, going to the cabin, etc
- Freedom
- Safety
- Ability to become more mature/independent

The following drawbacks were also noted:

Food: In some cases, students found the food to be bland, tasteless and not always the healthiest. This was especially true for the Mexican and Korean students. Other students

noted they do not feel they are getting sufficient food and feel guilty when they ask or want something extra to eat. It is important to note this is not the situation of all students, with many noting they feel quite comfortable helping themselves to a snack when they feel hungry.

More Information: Students described extreme variation in terms of the type and amount of information they received about their Homestay family prior to arriving in the province. On one extreme, students had several photos of the home and their room along with email addresses and phone numbers of their Homestay families. Several of these students had communicated directly by phone and/or email with their families prior to arriving. On the other extreme, students reported they received no information whatsoever. This was particularly true for those who became involved with the program at the last moment. These students reported feeling quite anxious about their Homestay placement.

Basic information students would like to have about their Homestay family includes:

- Who lives in the house
- What family members do for a living
- Hobbies and interests of household members
- Presence of pets
- House rules
- Photographs of the home and distance of the home from school and recreational activities

While much of this information is supplied to agents, there may be some breakdown in information sharing. This is an area that merits further investigation and attention.

Students would also like to receive some general information about the province and specifically about the community where they will be staying. Many noted the small size of the communities and the lack of a public transit system as big, unexpected surprises. This was especially true for students in the Western School District as well as those in Eastern residing in more rural locations.

Variation in Expectations and Experiences: Some students' expectations regarding their Homestay home and family were heavily influenced by North American television, with some expecting to be greeted by movie stars and to live in very high-end homes/mansions. In contrast, others were more grounded in terms of their expectations. In order for international education programs to realize their full potential, it is imperative students have realistic expectations and that any stereotypes are dealt with prior to their arrival.

This will make for a smoother transition for all involved.

Likewise, many students were surprised by their Homestay family's rules and responsibilities. Some of these students are from very wealthy homes and had difficulty adjusting to household chores, such as washing the dishes and keeping their rooms tidy. This was particularly true for Korean males. Once again, there is a need to clearly communicate this aspect of the program during student recruitment.

Some students were also disillusioned with regard to the breadth and depth of sporting activities available. Some students, most notably those coming from Mexico, were informed by their agent that there were plenty of opportunities to participate in sports such as soccer and tennis which were not available. In the Western School District, some students were told Marble Mountain was only a 10-minutes walk away from school and that they would be able to ski every day. This inaccurate information has resulted in confusion and disappointment for some.

As previously discussed, a few participants noted they and their Homestay families like to engage in different types of leisure activities. In some cases, students would have preferred to have been placed with a more 'active' family. It was not that they did not necessarily like or enjoy their Homestay family, but rather would have preferred to reside in a more active household. This is supported by the file review where students expressed a desire for an active family and were placed with families whose activities would be best described as sedentary.

Transportation: Some students, especially those living outside of Corner Brook as well as those living in Mount Pearl and Paradise, cited obtaining a ride as sometimes being challenging. For the most part, students rely on their Homestay family to drive them to and from places. Homestay families are not always able to fill such requests due to other personal or work commitments. Some students also noted their Homestay family's concerns regarding the price of gas as having a negative impact on their ability to avail of rides.

Guardianship and Consent: Students were provided with a brief emergency scenario in which they required medical attention. They were asked who would provide consent for their medical care. There was confusion over who would provide this consent with students identifying officials with the international education program in their school district, their natural parents or their Homestay family as their guardian. This area requires further clarification to ensure all parties understand their roles and responsibilities in such situations.

Homestay Coordinator's Role: Students generally provided positive feedback regarding their Homestay Coordinators. Most felt the Homestay Coordinators' role is to ensure the students are behaving appropriately and to become involved when there is an issue (e.g., bad grades, not studying, breaking a rule, wanting to change Homestay families, general discipline issues). In some respects, the coordinators were seen as having a 'policing role'.

Frequency of Contact: Students reported variance in the frequency of contact/visits by the Homestay Coordinators. Some reported seeing their coordinator on a monthly basis, while others reported visits as infrequently as once during a semester. In some cases, the coordinator is a teacher within their school and they have daily contact. Students felt comfortable approaching either their Homestay Coordinator or the program's staff if they had a problem or concern. All seemed familiar with how they would go about contacting any of these individuals. It is worth noting that some students feel the coordinators listen more to the Homestay family than they do to the students. Many feel the coordinator should adopt a more neutral position.

Homestay Family Moves: Several students in the focus groups have switched Homestay families for a variety of reasons. Reasons cited included: a sickness/health condition in the Homestay family, relocation of a Homestay family, and being too far away/living in a very small community. One of the students placed in a remote community indicated unavailability of advanced academic courses as the reason for a Homestay move. Overall, students who have switched Homestay families reported no problems with the process and have adjusted to their new Homestay family.

3.11. Homestay Family Focus Groups

Homestay Families, like students, also generally report positive experiences with the Homestay Program. Positive features of the program were identified as follows:

- Learning about another culture, including enjoying meals prepared by international students;
- Directly observing how different cultures can positively affect each other;
- Enriching the entire family's experience;
- Seeing a student enjoy a new experience, such as fishing or ski-dooing; and
- Having a student successfully adapting to a new family and being incorporated as a family member.

Most families report an easy adjustment and mutual respect for the culture of their students. Families fully expect to deal with cultural differences that include:

- Encouraging students to socialize with students beyond their own nationality;
- Overcoming initial language barriers;
- Natural parent's expectations (particularly those from South Korea) that their son or daughter not partake in so many leisure activities; and
- Different norms of privacy and personal space.

Several families also reported children from affluent families sometimes have difficulty performing normal household chores such as helping with meal cleanup and others have difficulty in adjusting to North American male and female roles and norms. To respond to these challenges, Homestay families would like more exposure to different cultural norms and the ways in which cultural differences can be bridged.

Homestay Family Application Process and Checks: Consistently, families reported a home visit from a Homestay Coordinator for the purposes of an interview and home inspection. However, there was great variety in the intensity of home visits as part of the application process. For example, one family reported an initial interview 6 years ago and no further interviews since then whereas another family reported 4 visits for the purposes of interviewing all family members. Recently, police and CYFS checks have been requested and no issues or concerns were reported for these measures. However, most family members report that annual checks appear excessive and favour biannual checks. Family members believe the current application and approval process was thorough and confirmed that no formal letter of approval was provided.

Guardianship and Consent: In both School Districts, there are varying perceptions of the role of the Homestay Family, the Homestay Coordinators and School District personnel in who the legal guardian is and who must provide consent. Indeed, in both focus groups, there was animated discussion regarding this. What is clear is that Host Family members require greater clarification of who performs what roles, including for medical and other emergencies. This must be accompanied by a list of personnel to call and all contact information, including for after-business hours.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Homestay Coordinator: All Homestay families reported they expected regular visits from their Homestay Coordinator. Some families noted they expected more regular visits and others reported the last visit had not occurred in over 3 months. This was named as an area of improvement. However, there was general agreement that the roles and responsibilities of Homestay Coordinators are as

follows:

- Be available to both prevent and early intervene in issues that a Homestay family and student might experience;
- Help manage behavioural issues (requiring good communication and conflict resolution skills);
- Serve as the communication link and liaison between homestay parents and agents;
- Act as the disciplinary authority (acts as back-up to Homestay family);
- Provide communication and feedback; and
- Organize activities for groups of Homestay families and students.

In both the Eastern and Western School District focus groups, families noted that their Homestay Coordinators appear to be overworked, thus some families hesitate to call them. However, in all cases, when contacted, Homestay Coordinators were described as being responsive and supportive.

Transportation: Homestay families in the Western and Eastern School Districts report different issues regarding transportation. In the Eastern School District, it appears Homestay families are supported and encouraged to promote Metrobus as a mode of transportation and this expectation is reasonably well accepted by students. However, for satellite communities, transporting students to movies and recreational events is time-consuming and becoming increasingly expensive. This is similar to the experience of the Western School Districts Homestay families who report having to impose limits on providing transportation. A suggestion was made that for communities without public transportation, an allowance for transportation should be added to the Homestay Family payments.

Discipline and Behavioural Issues: In both focus groups, Homestay families were present where significant discipline and behavioural issues had been experienced. These included consistently missing curfews, drinking and failing to put forth good effort in school studies. Here again, animated discussion occurred among focus group members, but with a general consensus being reached that the International Student Education Program should take more assertive steps in returning students to their home country. However, there were varying degrees of tolerance for student drinking expressed and a desire for Homestay families to have input into decision-making regarding the consequences for such misbehaviour.

Homestay Family Moves: Few families present had experience in having a student moved from their home. One family requested a student be moved, and coincidentally was

moved to another family also present in the focus group. In this instance, the student was non-cooperative and demanding and was posing similar difficulties in his new Homestay family. It was felt that families receiving students from another family should be fully briefed on such issues and concerns in advance. Other family members noted that among the international student population, there is a great deal of communication about the tactics best used to move from one family to another and that students readily avail of these tactics. Family members believe Homestay Coordinators should be more assertive in limiting Homestay family moves. Finally, one family reported a student was moved from their home, but without any explanation and feedback regarding the reasons for the move. This family is currently hosting another student. Families believe it is unacceptable not to be informed of a reason for a move.

Matching Process/Background Checks: For the Eastern School District, generally families indicated they were provided with 2-3 student profiles as a basis for selecting a preferred student. However, for the Western School District, this does not appear to be the process as a simple notification of the assigned student is communicated. Family members noted that the quality of information provided about a student is highly dependent upon the agent, with an observation that Ad Astra provides the most complete and useful information. In both School districts, families indicated they would like more information about their assigned students. Most importantly, they believe (criminal) background checks should be included as part of a student's acceptance into the International Student Education Program.

Student Expectations: Families generally agree that more work could be undertaken to ensure students know family rules before they arrive and that natural parents understand and agree to the rules as well. In addition, it was noted that better communication should occur between the natural family and the Homestay family regarding any limits on the amount and type of student spending permitted.

Homestay Family Reimbursement: Families generally agreed that while the monthly stipend is not a motivation for hosting a student, the current payment of \$500 monthly is inadequate to reasonably compensate for expenses, and especially for students who have inadequate financial resources to participate in recreational and other social activities. One Homestay family noted payments should be made on a biweekly basis as some months have 5 weeks.

Upon receiving a student, it was suggested that a kit of information could be provided that could include items such as:

- Student card;
- Insurance card and list of physicians that accept the insurance card;
- Allergies;
- Copy of student transcript;
- Information regarding who should sign school permission slips, who the legal guardian is;
- Contact list for other Homestay families and the names of students they are hosting;
- Metrobus pass; and
- Copy of current program policies and procedures.

3.12. Agent Input

Ensuring expectations are realistic, concentrating on the selection of Homestay families and the matching process are identified as the three priority areas.

Agents acknowledge they have good working relationships with those running the international education programs in both school districts. Many feel while the programs are well managed, more attention on identifying, clarifying and interpreting expectations of all parties involved (i.e., potential Homestay families and students) would greatly reduce challenges and obstacles encountered along the way.

The selection of Homestay families and the matching process are seen as having the biggest impact on the program's success. It was suggested both the Homestay family and student application processes focus more on expectations of both parties. This attention would greatly reduce some of the miscommunication and culture shock that has been experienced in the past.

Having the programs' representatives visit the students in their home countries prior to the matching process was also seen as having tremendous value. Such interaction between the student and those directly involved in the matching process was seen as increasing the likelihood of a successful match and also provides an opportunity for students to hear firsthand what to expect when living with their Homestay family.

Overall, agents would like to receive more timely information on the Homestay families and the selection process used. Agents trust that the programs have conducted rigorous screening of all its Homestay families, including all relevant safety checks. As would be expected, parents, especially those of younger students, are quite concerned about the safety and well-being of their children. Implementing a Homestay family screening process that is transparent and documents the safety and security checks completed was

identified as a means to demonstrate to the natural parents the high standards adhered to by the programs.

Agents would like to receive more detailed information regarding the Homestay family. In particular, they would like to receive the following information prior to the student leaving their country:

- Biosketch of all household members;
- Photos of the home and the household members;
- Description of the neighbourhood;
- Why the family has chosen to host an international student;
- Description of a typical weekday in the host family household;
- Weekend activities of the host family members;
- How the student will be involved in the home;
- Expectations regarding curfews and other house rules; and
- Responsibilities and chores to be performed by the student.

Having such information upfront would serve to eliminate any misconceived expectations and help ensure more successful matches. Ideally, all matching should be completed by the middle of July. This would allow sufficient time to provide the Homestay family's information to the student. There were some reports that matching has not been timely, which has resulted in many students and their natural families feeling somewhat stressed. These sentiments were also voiced by the students themselves in the focus groups.

It was recommended that the programs should be continually recruiting new families and have a surplus so that if a student needs to be moved quickly, there is a safe and supportive Homestay family immediately available.

It was also suggested that during the first month or so, the Homestay families and students be monitored more frequently. It was felt if an issue of incompatibility was to occur, it would become evident in the first month or so. Having the coordinators quickly identify and, if possible, mitigate emerging issues may result in a more positive outcome.

Finally, it also merits mention agents felt strongly students' requests regarding the communities where they wish to live must be honoured. If a student wants to be placed in an urban area (i.e., St. John's or Corner Brook) and is placed in a rural or isolated community, then their expectations will most definitely not align with reality and will result in a negative experience for both the student and the Homestay family.

3.13. File Audit

Below is a summary of the key findings of the file review conducted in both the Eastern and Western School Districts. The quantitative summary can be found in Appendix H.

Applications for Families and Students

Eastern: All of the Homestay family and student files contained an application, with the exception of 1 student who has been in the program for three years. The original application appears to be misfiled or misplaced. There was also 1 student application where the natural parent had signed the document, but not the student.

Western: All Homestay family and students files contained an application. However, the following omissions were noted:

- One student application was not signed by either the student or their natural parents. Their names were typed when an actual signature was required.
- One student applicant failed to answer all the questions.
- Two of Homestay family applications were incomplete, missing such information as the applicant's date of birth and information pertaining to other household members.
- One student was sent written confirmation of program entry, prior to the completion of the application.

Criminal Records Checks

Eastern: Criminal checks were completed on all Homestay parents. In 4 files the criminal checks were completed on the parents, but not the children. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] – (Section 30 –ATIPPA)

Western: Criminal checks were completed on 8 of the 15 Homestay family files reviewed. With respect to the remaining 7:

- One Homestay family file contained no criminal checks.
- Two files contained checks for the parents, but not the children.
- Four files contained checks for one parent, but not both parents.

Child, Youth and Family Services Checks

Eastern: All files contained the request for CYFS on file, but actual check results were not on file.

Western: Six of the files reviewed had CYFS completed and 5 did not. Of the remaining 4 files:

- Two files contained CYFS checks for the parents, but not for other family members over the age of 12.
- Two files contained CYFS checks for one parent, but not both parents.

It also merits mention that the CYFS check revealed that 2 families have had previous involvement with CYFS. These families currently have Homestay students and there is no documentation regarding the nature of the involvement with CYFS or the actions taken by the program.

During the course of this review, there was discussion regarding the depth and scope of the CYFS checks. It is understood that CYFS within the Regional Health Authorities have the capability to conduct different levels of checks, but that this is an intensive process involving professional assessment. More work is required to determine what level of check is required to ensure the safety of international students in this type of environment. The Eastern School District has begun discussions with Eastern Health officials to determine the level of checks required and the consent form to be used to initiate the checks.

There was no documentation on any of the student files in either region indicating the criminal or CYFS checks were conducted prior to student placement.

Reference Checks

Eastern: All references were checked using a standardized form and documentation was on file. One reference check must come from a 'community leader' (educator, clergy, police officer).

Western: While all but one application form listed 2 to 3 references, there was no documentation to indicate they had been checked. The majority of reference names provided were family members or friends of the applicant.

Home Inspections

Eastern: Documentation was present in all files to indicate an in-home interview and inspection had been completed. It was not evident from the information contained in 9 of

the 13 files how many household members were present at the time of the interview.

Western: 10 of the 15 family files had home interview and inspection forms completed, with 2 of the 10 having only the inspection documented. On one file, a follow-up visit was deemed necessary, but there is no evidence that this second visit was conducted.

Orientation of Students and Families

Eastern: There was no documentation on any of the family files to indicate orientation was provided. Seven of the student files have documentation pertaining to orientation attendance.

Western: There is no documentation on any of the family or student files to indicate orientation was provided.

Academic Information from Students' Home Country and Host School

Eastern: All student files contained academic information from their host schools. Two of the 12 student files were missing academic information from their school in their home country.

Western: Eleven of the 12 student files contained academic information from the host school as well as the school attended in the students' home country.

Placement of Students with Single Parents

Eastern: The placement of students with single individuals was evident in 3 files. Of these 3 files:

- Two were single females hosting female students.
- One was a single female hosting a male student.

Western: The placement of students with single individuals was evident in 2 files. Of these 2 files:

- One was a single mother with a son of her own hosting a male student.
- One was a single mother with 2 children of her own (gender unknown) hosting a male student.

Monitoring Reports

Eastern: Coordinators' monthly monitoring reports were on file and up to date. As of January 2008, all monthly reports detailed the type of contact with the student and the date. The reports provided a sufficient level of information.

Western: 10 of the 12 student files contained incomplete monthly monitoring reports. In several cases, there were monthly reports on file, but the content of these reports was

exactly the same as the previous month, with the exception of the date change. It was also common to observe the monthly reports of several other Homestay students on other students' files (i.e., a Coordinator's report would contain status updates on several students and then photocopied and placed in each relevant student's file). Finally, the level of detail and the documentation of times, dates and type of contact (i.e., in-person, telephone, email) was inconsistent and often lacking.

Terms of Participation

Eastern: Student signatures were missing from 3 Terms of Participation forms. Two files were missing parent signatures (names were typed).

Western: Student signatures were missing from 2 of the Terms of Participation forms as were two natural parent signatures.

Emergency Contact Information

Eastern: There is no documentation on any of the files to indicate emergency information was provided to the Homestay student or the student's natural family or agent.

Western: There is no documentation on any of the files to indicate emergency information was provided to the Homestay student or the student's natural family or agent.

Incidences and Emergencies

Eastern: Documentation on one file indicating a student with a headache and was taken to a hospital emergency department by the Homestay parent. This was documented in a monthly report.

Western: There was no specific documentation of any medical incidences. However, one monthly report indicates a student broke an arm.

Consent for Medical Treatment

Eastern: There is no consent for medical treatment form on any files and no indication that consent was required or provided.

Western: There is no consent for medical treatment form on any files and no indication that consent was required or provided.

Handbook Receipt

Eastern: There was no documentation to indicate the student handbook was provided to

the Homestay student prior to their arrival. In contrast, it was evident on 7 of the 13 files that the Homestay families received their handbook.

Western: There was no documentation to indicate the student handbook was provided to the Homestay student prior to their arrival. There was a copy of the student handbook in each of the student files, but it was not dated and there was no way to determine if the handbook had been sent to the student.

Similarly, there was a copy of the Homestay family handbook in each Homestay family file, but it was not dated and there was no evidence to indicate the Homestay received the handbook.

Homestay Placement Changes for Students

Eastern: One student required a Homestay change. The request to change Homestay family was completed and on file. There was no documentation to indicate the agent or natural family was notified of this change.

Western: Three students required a Homestay change. The request to change Homestay family was on file, but was not signed or dated. There was no documentation to indicate the agent or natural family was notified of this change.

Travel Requests

Eastern: Two of the 12 students travelled outside of the province, but no request to travel was found on file.

Western: Four of the 12 students travelled outside of the province. Of the four, only one student file contained the request to travel outside the province form and this was completed and signed by the natural parents. Two of the files contained the travel itineraries. One of the four files contained contact information for the final travel destination.

Liability Insurance

Eastern: All Homestay family files reviewed indicated they had liability insurance, but files did not contain evidence that such insurance is in place.

Western: There were no questions on the Homestay application pertaining to liability insurance and no documentation to indicate its presence.

Arrival and Departure Information

Eastern: Nine of the 13 student files contained flight arrival information (travel itineraries,

including dates, times and flight numbers). There was no documentation as to who was responsible for meeting students at the arrival airport.

Three student files contained information regarding departing travel arrangements (travel itineraries, including dates, times and flight numbers). There was no indication of who was responsible for taking these students to the airport and who will be responsible at the final destination.

Western: Arrival information was noted on one student's file (travel itinerary) and departure information (travel itinerary) was present on 3 student files. No documentation was available to determine who was assigned to meet the student when they arrived or who was responsible for taking the student to the airport for departure.

Behavioural Contracts

Eastern: One file contained a behavioural contract. All appropriate documentation was on file, with the exception of the natural parent's signature.

Western: One file contained a behavioural contract. The behaviour in question was documented and a behavioural contract was signed by the student. There was no documentation of the actions taken, the follow-up process, duties of those involved or the notification of the agent/natural parents. The natural parent's signature was missing from this document.

Health Insurance Information

Eastern: All student files contained a copy of the student's health insurance information. There was no documentation to indicate this information was provided to the Homestay family.

Western: Nine of the 12 student files contained a copy of the student's health insurance information. There was no documentation to indicate this information was provided to the Homestay family.

Agent Information

Eastern: Two of the 12 student files did not contain the agent's contact information (name, address, email and telephone numbers).

Western: Nine of the 12 student files did not contain the agent's contact information (name, address, email and telephone numbers).

Custodianship

Eastern: All 12 student files contained the affidavit of custodianship. However, in 8 of the 12 files the natural parents' signature along with the date was missing.

Western: All 12 student files contained the affidavit of custodianship. However, 2 were not dated and one was missing the signature and seal of the notary.

Immunization Records

Eastern: 7 of the 12 student files did not have immunization records. It should be noted that immunization records have been identified as a document that must now accompany all student applications for 2008/09.

Western: 11 of the 12 files did not have immunization records.

Maltreatment

Eastern: There were no documented student reports of being maltreated.

Western: There were no documented student reports of being maltreated.

Copies of Study Visa and Passport

Eastern: 6 of the 12 files did not contain a photocopy of the student's passport and only one student file contained a copy of the student's study permit. It should be noted this information is not currently required by the application process.

Western: All files contained a photocopy of the student's passport and 11 files contained a copy of the student's study permit.

Photos

Eastern: There were no photos of the Homestay family or their home on any of the family files.

Western: Ten of the 15 files contained an exterior photo of the Homestay family's house. This photo was included in the letter sent to the student by the program director. No photos of the family members themselves were present.

Homestay Information Provided to Schools

Eastern: The Homestay information was provided to the schools through a letter addressed to the principal. This was present for all student files.

Western: There was no documentation on file to indicate the host schools received the Homestay families' contact information.

Other Observations and Comments

Eastern: The Eastern School District's International Education Program, NISEP, has undergone a number of staff changes over the past 18 months. Practices and procedures have been put into place since that time to further strengthen the program. The Eastern School District has invested a significant amount of time and resources in updating their files to ensure documentation is in place. More specifically, all student and family files have been updated and internal random file checks are conducted to ensure the information is current and accurate. A checklist has been developed for both the student and Homestay family files and is signed and dated by the Homestay coordinator and the Director of NISEP.

NISEP has also taken steps to ensure the host schools have the information they require for international students. Prior to international students commencing studies, a letter is sent from NISEP's Director to the principal to inform them of the students' arrival. This letter contains:

- The student's name;
- Country of origin;
- Grade level;
- Homestay parent's name, address and telephone number;
- Homestay coordinator's name and telephone number; and
- NISEP Director's name and telephone number.

NISEP has also implemented a survey that principals are asked to complete once during the academic year. This survey has been designed to assess the academic and social integration of the international students in the general school setting.

During the orientation session, students review the Terms of Participation and again sign this form along with the NISEP Director.

In also merits mention, the management team meets every six weeks to discuss and action

items pertaining to international education and the Homestay program.

Overall, the contents of both the students and the corresponding Homestay family files were in good order. The Homestay coordinators are cognizant of the importance of documentation as can be reflected in the high calibre of detail evident in their monthly reporting.

Finally, it was noted that Homestay Family and students' files are located in a filing cabinet within the Program Director's office and that the office is locked when the office is vacant. This provides a level of security for the confidential files of the International Student Education Program.

Nonetheless, the following modifications are required:

- Capture the number of household members present and absent during the Homestay interview process;
- On the Homestay application, capture the date of birth of both homestay parents;
- On the Homestay application, revise wording so the applicant provides information for all other household members, including non-relatives; and
- Ensure information pertaining to other students, including travel times are not placed on other students' files.

Western: The Western School District International Education Staff, in particular the Homestay Coordinators must pay closer attention to documentation. Most notably, interactions with students and Homestay families must be captured in a consistent manner and the date and type of contact must be noted. Standards for documentation are required and this may also require training for the Home Stay Coordinators.

There were elements of information contained in both the student and Homestay family files that require better explanations or modifications. They are as follows:

- **Student Questionnaire.** A student questionnaire was noted in several student files, but its purpose was unclear. This questionnaire was not dated and there was no indication on file as to how this information was used or how responses to the questions were actioned. If this questionnaire is to be used in the future, it should be modified to include a space for the date of completion and its purpose should be stated.
- **Student Application Form.** This form must provide a space for date completed along with a consistent date format (i.e., month-day-year).

- **Mid-way Evaluation of Homestay Family.** The form should be revised to include space for the name of the Homestay family as well as the student.

Other modifications that would serve to strengthen the program's documentation include:

- Develop a standardized process for checking Homestay family references and for documenting the reference checks in Homestay family files. References from family members and personal friends should not be accepted.
- Do not place confidential student information of a student on other students' files. Monthly progress reports should be generated separately for each student.
- When CYFS or criminal checks are positive, they need to be actioned and the process documented on the Homestay family file.

Finally, it is not clear that confidential Homestay family and student files, while contained in filing cabinets are secure when the office is vacant. A locked area for these files is required.

3.14. Background Checks

As indicated, both the Eastern and Western School Districts now require Homestay Family applicants to submit to a criminal records and CYFS check. Both of these checks are discussed in turn.

Certificate of Conduct. Homestay Family applicants are required to obtain a Certificate of Conduct from the local police authority (RNC or RCMP) for all household members 18 years of age and older.

In those communities where the RNC are the law enforcement agency, individuals who wish to obtain a Certificate of Conduct must complete a form and submit to a criminal records check. This check involves a database search of the RNC's internal database along with the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database. CPIC is a computerized information system that provides all Canadian law enforcement agencies with information on crimes and criminals. CPIC only includes those offences that require an individual to be fingerprinted.

If the search of these databases reveals an offence, the applicant will then be asked to provide a Certificate of Criminal Convictions, which will detail the nature of the offence and time served. In the latter situation, the RNC would consult with their legal counsel to determine whether or not a Certificate of Conduct can be issued. It takes approximately 7-10 business days to obtain a Certificate of Conduct.

Like the RNC, the RCMP search their own internal databases along with CPIC when issuing Certificates of Conduct. However, the major difference between the RCMP and RNC processes is that prior to the searches of these databases, all applicants are required to obtain a Certificate of Conduct from the Provincial Court, even if they have not committed a criminal offence. There is a \$25 fee to obtain this certificate from the Provincial Court system. This process requires approximately 7 days. The findings of these checks are released to the applicant and not a third party. The applicant provides this certificate to the local RCMP detachment and the request is then processed. It takes approximately 2-3 weeks for a Certificate of Conduct request to be processed and issued.

Both the RNC and RCMP have the ability to exercise discretion when issuing Certificates of Conduct. For example, if a check reveals a person has been a suspect in a sexual offence on several occasions, but has not been formally charged, the authorities may decide not to issue the Certificate. Thus, the issuance of a Certificate of Conduct is not always a clear cut decision.

The RNC and RCMP also conduct 'Vulnerable Sector Checks'. This type of check involves searching a database of those individuals who have been pardoned for a sexual offence. It does not appear at the time of this review that either of the School Districts have been requesting this type of check. It merits mention that, the Eastern School District just became aware of this type of check and, on a go forward basis, will require all Homestay applicants to submit to this check. They are also exploring the possibility of having existing Homestay families also undergo this process.

There are two shortcomings with the types of checks conducted by both the RNC and RCMP. First, the CPIC database contains only those criminal offences that require the perpetrator to be fingerprinted. It does not capture summary offences. Examples of summary offences include shoplifting, speeding, not wearing a helmet while operating an ATV, and some minor assaults, to name a few. If a summary offence occurred outside the jurisdiction of the law enforcement agency conducting the search, the offence will not appear as part of the search. The searching law enforcement agency only has access to those summary offences that occurred within their jurisdiction and are recorded in their internal database. The RCMP tries to overcome this limitation by requiring the applicant to list the last five places he/she has lived. It is then up to the agency requiring the check to have the applicant to obtain a Certificate of Conduct from each of these areas or regions.

The second issue with these checks is they are conducted on the basis of the applicant's name and date of birth. If the individual has changed either their first or last name, then in reality a separate search should be conducted on each additional name. The only way to overcome this limitation entirely is to have all applicants submit to a fingerprint check. This would require the applicant to be fingerprinted which is then submitted to Ottawa for screening. This is a lengthy process that takes at a minimum 150 days. This is the most

comprehensive check available and the one that individuals wishing to adopt must undergo. This check is the most thorough as an individual can falsify a name, but not a fingerprint.

Another area that warrants consideration are background checks on Homestay family members under the age of majority. Generally, under the *Criminal Youth Justice Act*, criminal information cannot be released on youth under 18 years of age. To overcome this issue, it was recommended that Homestay applicants be required to agree for a reference check to be completed on each family member less than 18 years of age. This would involve the individuals giving their permission to the program to contact school personnel to obtain a character reference.

It was also suggested that guidelines be in place with respect to the selection of references. It was recommended that applicants be required to receive a reference from their current employer/immediate supervisor, along with those agencies and organizations that they are involved with on a regular basis.

CYFS Checks: Homestay family applicants are also required to submit to a CYFS check. There is considerable confusion regarding the CYFS and under what authority the CYFS checks are provided. A proper and informed consent is required to request a CYFS check.

These checks are conducted by the CYFS programs which previously had been part of the former Health and Community Services boards and now part of the Regional Health Authorities.

For both the Eastern and Western Health Authorities, any family or family member who interfaces with the CYFS system is registered in its own database. It is important to recognize that any person who contacts the CYFS program to make an inquiry for a service, such as counselling for a family member, is registered. There is no provincial or regional child abuse registry. Thus, a CYFS 'hit' only means that a person has had contact with the CYFS program, but the nature of the contact is not known from the database search. It must also be noted that by far, the vast majority of our citizens have never had any contact with CYFS programs and that the absence of a 'hit' does not in any way infer the suitability of a family for a Homestay student. Indeed, those interviewed in the CYFS system noted that child perpetrators often seek opportunities to gain access to children.

Should a 'hit' occur, a social worker must then review the applicant's file and make a professional judgement about the nature and substance of the contact with the CYFS program. This is often a time-consuming process that falls within the mix of competing time priorities and not always possible within the timeframes required by the Eastern and Western School Districts. For example, Eastern Health's CYFS program indicates that a 6-month lead time would be optimal.

It is not at all clear that the Eastern and Western School Districts and the Regional Health Authorities have a mutual understanding of the caveats involved in the CYFS check process, nor of the expected volume of requests, of the timeliness of the checks, and of the human resource investment in conducting a review of a file if a 'hit' occurs. Clear mutual agreement could be articulated through a memorandum of understanding.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities in the International Education Program

In other Canadian jurisdictions, the Ministries of Education have limited to virtually no legislative authority for international student education. Where there is a role, it is limited to the Minister's ability to set fees for international students who come to the province for education purposes. Therefore, the role and scope of K-12 school boards in international student education in other provinces has evolved without a legislative framework.

School boards in other jurisdictions are operating autonomously, though provincial organizations exist in some provinces. For example, the Nova Scotia International Student Program exists as a consortium of 7 school boards who cooperate to support and enhance their international student education programs, including through the development of policy that all members agree to implement. A representative of the Ministry of Education attends meetings as an ex-officio member.

Ministries of Education in other Canadian jurisdictions have identified the Homestay programs as an area of growing concern for policy development. There is an opportunity for the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education along with the Eastern and Western School Districts to lead the way in addressing this policy need.

The legislative authority for ensuring optimal safety and well-being of homestay students is absent for both the Department of Education and the School Districts. The current *Schools Act* is essentially silent on international education within the K-12 system, except for the provision whereby the Minister of Education may set fees for international students who have come to the province for the purpose of attending school (Section 117(b) (ix)) and for school boards to charge fees (Sections 12 (2) (b) and 14 (2)). Thus, the *Schools Act* currently does not provide the Minister with the authority for establishing policy or issuing policy directives, nor does it make specific provision for school district boards to deliver the range of international education programs currently being offered. Apart from academic term placements and the Homestay program, the Eastern and Western School Districts offer short-term summer programs, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Currently, within the Eastern School District, the Newfoundland International Student Education Program (NISEP) is responsible for overseeing international studies and is governed by its own board of directors. The Western School District has established an International Education Program to recruit students and to manage all aspects of international education in the Western School District. This program was established in partnership with the Humber Education Alliance (HEA) which also had a broader role in post-secondary education. The Western School District and HEA work together to pursue and explore market opportunities. In both school districts, there is a staff resource who provides program oversight (as a significant role in addition to other school board roles) as well as a fulltime program administrator who is responsible for all day-to-day activities.

Legislative authority is best developed on the basis of policy and practices that are known to be effective. The Department of Education and the Eastern and Western School Districts have developed a set of draft guidelines for the province's International Education Program (K-12). A reasonable goal would be for the parties to conclude this work and see it emerge as policy rather than guidelines. Policy clearly establishes a higher level of accountability and standards than what is described in a set of guidelines. The joint policy should also articulate the roles and responsibilities of each party in implementing and monitoring the established policy. The following are suggested roles and responsibilities:

School Districts

- Work cooperatively with other School Districts in the province to develop, monitor and revise (as necessary) policy that supports all elements of the International K-12 Student Education Program;
- Be responsible for the International K-12 Student Education Program's delivery, management and operations, including the Homestay Program;
- Promote and market the province as a destination of choice for international K-12 student education;
- Develop and monitor key performance and growth indicators as jointly developed with the Department of Education;
- Submit files and records to a third party as a basis of a biannual review of key program elements, including the Homestay Program;
- Provide an annual report to the Minister of Education regarding key performance and growth indicators and biannually, the results and related actions planned as a result of the biannual third party review.

Department of Education

- Provide advice, guidance and support to the School Districts regarding marketing strategies;
- Require annual reporting of the School Districts regarding the development and monitoring of key performance and growth measures;
- Require School Districts to submit to a biannual third party review of all program elements, including the Homestay Program;
- Require biannual reports of the third party review, including action plans and measures being taken to address program components identified as needing improvement. Depending on the nature of findings, periodic reporting on planned actions may be required;
- Support and encourage linkages between the International K-12 Student Education Program and the strategic goals of the Department and of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; and
- Support the cooperative efforts of the School Districts in International K-12 Student Education.

Throughout the course of this review, it was evident there are unresolved issues relating to receiving timely CYFS checks. As part of the School Districts roles and responsibilities, memorandums of understanding should be established with the Regional Health Authorities regarding the CYFS checks. These memorandums of understanding should be reviewed at least every 2 years and if issues arise, on a more frequent basis.

5.0 Conclusions and Summary

The primary goal of this project is to review the homestay component of the international studies program in both the Eastern and Western School Districts for the purposes of informing future program policies, practices and guidelines. It must be acknowledged that the International K-12 Student Education Program is still relatively new in Newfoundland and Labrador given other province's more extensive experiences. Practices have emerged that initially served the Programs well. However, now more robust policies, practices and guidelines are required to support future growth.

There are benefits to the International Student Education programs offered by the Eastern and Western School Districts. International education programs offer students from other countries the opportunity to experience a new culture and learn the English language. Introducing international students to classrooms and school enriches the learning experiences of other students and instils a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and of

different practices and beliefs. It allows for the development of long lasting friendships for both international students as well as students in host schools. It has the potential to serve as a feeder system for post-secondary institutions and to spur economic development. Host schools receive a payment for each international student that represents an important source of funds to support individual school programming and extracurricular activities.

However, these benefits must outweigh the risks associated with hosting minor children, far away from their home countries and natural parents. There is indeed risk if prudent and robust policies and practices are not in place to assure the safety and security of Homestay students. The 2007 file review of the Homestay family and student files conducted by the Department of Health revealed considerable documentation weaknesses and significant risk exposure. The Eastern School District has demonstrated that effective remedial measures can be quickly implemented. This School District has invested significant time and resources to ensure that recommendations from the 2007 file review are being implemented.

There areas of most considerable risk identified through this review are in the following areas:

- Assessment of Homestay family applicants;
- Documentation of processes; and
- Sufficiency of monitoring of Homestay families and students.

In addition, as the International K-12 Student Education Program further matures and grows, some areas of risk may become more prominent, requiring for example, background checks on student applicants.

The following recommendations are intended to establish policies and other processes that represent best practices to mitigate high risk and potential risk areas. Given the urgency of addressing these areas, the School Districts, on an immediate basis should conclude the draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program based upon due consideration of the recommendations in this report. However, as discussed elsewhere in this report, implementation of the Guidelines should be considered as mutually agreed upon policy between the School Districts and the Department of Education. Furthermore, the School Districts should aim to have new processes in place prior to the commencement of 2008-09 academic year. This should set the stage for Homestay Program policy and practices that are known to be effective and establish a basis for a future legislative framework.

6.0 Recommendations

1. Roles and Responsibilities:

In the absence of a legislative framework for International Student Education and the Homestay Program in particular, a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Education and the Eastern and Western School Districts should be developed as soon as possible. This memorandum should seek to address roles and responsibilities of each partner and especially the role of The Department of Education in ensuring the Homestay Program is compliant with the policies and standards established in the draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program.

2. Draft Guidelines for the International K-12 Student Homestay Program:

The draft guidelines should be concluded on an immediate basis and incorporate the recommendations included in this report. It is further recommended that the implementation of the Guidelines be considered as mutually agreed upon policy between the School Districts and the Department of Education.

3. Criminal Checks:

Criminal and vulnerable sector checks should be conducted annually on all family and household members 18 years of age and over, and on family and household members who reach age 18 during the course of a Homestay Program placement. Families should be required to immediately report to the Homestay program any family or household member who is either a suspect in a crime or where a criminal charge has been laid.

Children of Homestay families who are between the ages of 12 and 18 should have documented school reference checks.

4. CYFS Checks:

CYFS checks should be conducted biannually for all Homestay family and household members 18 years of age and over, and on family and household members who reach age 18 during the course of a Homestay Program placement. Families should be required to immediately report to the Homestay program any change to the family or household membership and of any encounter with the CYFS system.

For both criminal and CYFS, the Eastern and Western School Districts should retain

the right to request more frequent checks that might be warranted.

5. Documentation Standards and Training:

As there are documentation weaknesses apparent in the Homestay family and Homestay student files, it is recommended that documentation standards be developed and that training of these standards be conducted with International Student Education Program staff Homestay Coordinators. As noted elsewhere, this work could be undertaken by a social worker under a contractual basis.

6. Critical Incident Management:

A critical incident management plan should be established to ensure these incidences are documented, reported to the appropriate officials, communicated to the natural family and managed to avoid negative publicity both locally and internationally. This plan should identify those involved and their roles, responsibilities and accountably as well as the procedures to be followed.

7. Guardianship:

Greater clarity for Homestay families, Homestay students and their natural parents, schools, and the program generally regarding guardianship is required. All parties need to understand that a guardian is accessible on a 24/7 basis, and the alternate contact in the event the guardian is travelling outside the region or cannot be physically present in the event of an emergency. A hierarchical structure may be required that enables an alternate in the event the guardian cannot be reached. Having the guardianship tied to a role versus a person may be viable, though legal advice is required to assess the implications of this alternative. In addition, the Homestay Orientation program and related documents should provide all guardian contact information as well as a clear list of issues and concerns that require immediate referral to a guardian.

8. Homestay Family Agreement:

A legal Homestay family agreement should be in place. This agreement should include detail on the following aspects of the program:

- Fee schedule payment to Homestay families
- A clause outlining the program will strive to meet the requests of the Homestay family in student selection, but cannot guarantee all requests will be met.
- General housing conditions, expectations and responsibilities of the Homestay family.
- Grounds for Homestay family termination and student removal including

notification requirements and immediate removal of a student.

- Exclusion of liability. This section should indicate that the School District is not responsible for any damages or injuries that the Homestay family may experience as a result of hosting an international student. It should also advise the Homestay family to contact their insurance provider to ensure they have adequate coverage for the student while in their home.

9. Homestay Move Requirements and Procedures:

The following requirements and procedures should be in place to guide Homestay moves and procedures:

- Students should not be able to change Homestay families during an academic year more than twice and a third time in exceptional cases only. Continued movement of students from one Homestay family to another is an indicator of poor adjustment, insufficient support or monitoring and/or of the need to return the student to their home country.
- If a Homestay move is not warranted for safety or security reasons, the student should pay a fee.
- The student should be driven by the Homestay coordinator to the new Homestay family. This will avoid the two families meeting.
- If a Homestay family has more than two students move from their home for whatever reason, an investigation should be launched.
- The reasons for the move must be documented and the agent and natural parents must be notified of the move prior to it occurring. The natural parent's knowledge and approval of the move should be documented on the student's file.

10. Homestay Coordinator Qualifications:

- While access to social work expertise is required to further improve the Homestay program, it need not be a skill and educational requirement of the Homestay Coordinators. The Eastern and Western School Districts should consider options for accessing this level of expertise. Options might include engaging a social worker on a contractual basis in each School District or cost sharing this resource between the two Districts. Discussions need to occur between the two Districts to assess which option is most viable.

It is envisioned this professional would act as a resource to the Homestay Coordinators, most notably in the selection of Homestay families and managing student and Homestay family relations. In addition, this professional would be responsible for designing and delivering the coordinator's orientation along with ongoing training requirements. This professional could also be engaged to

conduct internal audits.

The following topics should be covered in the Homestay Coordinator orientation process:

- ✓ Cross-cultural communication and sensitivities
- ✓ Legal issues of relating to the Homestay Program
- ✓ Documentation requirements and methods
- ✓ Conflict resolution
- ✓ Counselling
- ✓ Interview techniques
- ✓ Homestay Family selection
- ✓ Risk management
- ✓ Emergency protocols

11. Homestay Coordinators (additional responsibilities and practices):

It is recommended that:

- Homestay Coordinators should conduct both scheduled and unscheduled Homestay visits.
- Homestay Coordinators should have the right to move a student without advance notice if a situation is perceived to be unsatisfactory or unsafe. The program should also reserve the right to terminate a family's participation in the program if the family does not provide a safe and satisfactory environment for the student.
- A performance management process should be established for the Homestay Coordinators.

12. Homestay Application Process:

It is recommended that:

- All background checks and assessments and home inspections should be completed prior to student placement.
- The host school (principal or guidance councillor) should be contacted and provide information on the prospective Homestay family's relationship with the school.
- Homestay applications should be updated whenever there is a change in the household composition or on an annual basis.
- A Homestay family should consist of at least one adult 25 years of age or older.
- The criminal check should be updated annually and CYFS check should be updated every two years. For both checks, the Program should retain the right to request more frequent checks as a result of change in the household composition or any sign or symptom that might indicate the need for additional checks.

- Homestay families should not be permitted to request a damage deposit or any additional fees from the student.
- A surplus of Homestay families should be recruited. This will improve the suitability of matches and avoid pressure caused by a shortage of families. It will also assist in those situations where students must be removed from a Homestay family immediately for whatever reasons.
- Homestay families should be no more than 30 minutes from the host school by public transportation.
- Photos of the Homestay family and their home should be on file. The use of these files must be in accordance with privacy laws.
- Homestay staff, their immediate relatives, as well as individuals working in the host school should not be eligible to become Homestay families. Students in such environments may not be forthcoming with problems or issues they are experiencing with their Homestay, as they have no objective third party to approach.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a Homestay Selection Committee in each School District. This committee would be responsible for reviewing all Homestay applications and overseeing the selection process. When a potential Homestay family has completed the application process, including the interview, home inspection, and reference, criminal, and CYFS checks, their application would be submitted to the committee for final approval. The social work resource previously identified could be an active member of this committee.

13. Data Management:

It is recommended that:

- Measures to ensure the security of all files (manual and electric) should be implemented and accessible only to Homestay staff. All electronic files should be password protected.
- Homestay staff should have 24-hour access to pertinent student and Homestay family information in the event of an emergency. This process can be achieved by developing a form that appears at the front of the students' file with all the relevant information documented. If feasible, this information should be accessible electronically via a remote system.
- Documentation should exist in each file pertaining to:
 - ✓ Complaints
 - ✓ Important calls
 - ✓ Home visits and Homestay family assessments
 - ✓ Problems
 - ✓ Emergencies
 - ✓ Monitoring procedures

- ✓ Feedback and evaluations from Homestay parents, students and agents
- Comments, dates and actions taken should be documented on file (hard copy or electronically) in a consistent manner. These documents demonstrate on-going contact and duty of care obligations and are important if required in a legal proceeding.
- A process should be in place so that student files can be linked with the appropriate Homestay family file.
- Students and Homestay families have the legal right to view information collected regarding them. Therefore, it is essential that standardized documentation procedures be consistently used. The files should not contain inappropriate comments or remarks.

14. Homestay Orientation Process:

It is recommended that:

- Orientation sessions for Homestay family should be compulsory and attendance documented on the Homestay family file.
- Orientation sessions should be kept small, with the number of participants being 10 or less.
- Cross-cultural training should be a component of the orientation process and should be delivered by an expert in this field of study. Cross-cultural training should also be included within the student orientation process.

15. Student Application Process and Background Checks:

Based on the findings of this review, it is recommended that more attention be given to assessing potential international students from a behavioural and mental health perspective. Questions should be included on the student application form to assess the student's mental health status as well as previous criminal behaviours.

Consideration should also be given to advising Homestay parents, in writing, of the program's limitations in screening students. In the Homestay family agreement it should be specified that the program cannot guarantee the character of the student and is not liable for any damages or injuries caused by the Homestay student.

16. Agent Relations:

The School Districts should have a process in place to screen and recruit foreign agents. This should entail meeting the agent face-to-face, requesting a profile of the agent to be kept on file and checking references. It should be noted that the Eastern School District has already implemented such a process.

In addition, when agents are identified, it is imperative that they are thoroughly briefed on the School Districts guidelines, policies and procedures. This will aid in assuring the agents represent the program accurately and adhere to the School District's practices.

17. Ongoing Program Evaluation:

The program should survey all of its stakeholders (students, Homestay families and agents) at the end of each academic year to determine where program improvements are required. The findings from these surveys should be used to revise or improve guidelines and practices.

18. Policies to be Included in Both the Student and Homestay Family Handbooks:

Based on the findings of the cross-jurisdictional review and best practices, guidelines and policies need to be developed relating to the areas identified below. The guidelines and policies identified below are in addition to those already identified in the current draft Guidelines for K-12 International Student Homestay Program. When developed and approved, these items should be communicated to potential and existing students along with the Homestay families. These guidelines should also be included within both the student and Homestay family handbooks.

- **Curfews.** A consistent curfew should be established by the program for students. The curfews established should take into consideration the student's age and different curfews should be in place for weeknights and weekends. Some programs have set/support a curfew of 10:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday and a 12:00 midnight curfew on Fridays and Saturdays for senior high students.
- **Student Whereabouts.** Homestay students should provide detailed information to their Homestay families as to where they are going, how they can be reached, when they will be back and with whom they are going out. If the student will be later than planned, they are to contact their Homestay family immediately.
- **Sleepovers.** Sleepovers should not be permitted by the International Education Program. If for some reason the Homestay family has to make alternate sleeping arrangements for the student, approval must be granted by the International Student Education Program and details on the student's whereabouts must be documented. Under no circumstance is an International student to remain in the Homestay family home overnight unsupervised.
- **Showering and Bathing.** The length and time of showering/bathing should be established. Other programs have suggested that a reasonable showering time is approximately 10 minutes, as longer showers will drain the hot water tank. This may result in insufficient hot water for other members of the household.

Other programs have left this issue for the Homestay family to set, but note it in the handbooks.

- **Telephone Usage.** The rules regarding telephone usage need to be documented. Parameters need to be established for the length and time for receiving and making telephone calls as well as telephone bill payment. Collect calls and calling cards should be recommended. The installation of a second telephone line for the student should be mutually agreed upon by both the Homestay parent and the student, with the student assuming the cost.
- **Internet Access.** Homestay families must be prepared to provide Internet access in their homes. The family cannot charge extra fees for the provision of this service. The program needs to establish parameters for Internet usage and set time guidelines/restrictions. Also guidelines need to be in place to ensure students do not go to inappropriate websites (i.e. sites containing pornographic material or material of immoral or questionable content). It must be made clear that at no time should a student alter, add, delete or create any programs on the Homestay family computer (i.e. change the default language).
- **Clothing.** It should be the responsibility of the international student to purchase/bring appropriate clothing. Students should have the right to their own taste in clothing, but should be required to adhere to the 'appropriate dress' code of the host schools.
- **Part-time Work.** International students may accept honorariums for such activities as babysitting, yard work or snow removal, but are unable to accept a position whereby a social insurance number is required.
- **Religious Beliefs.** Homestay families and students must show mutual respect for one another's religious beliefs. International students should have the right to practice their own religion and Homestay families should make it easy for students to attend religious services. Students may accompany their Homestay parents to religious services, but Homestay families do not have the right to insist they attend such activities.
- **Medical Treatment.** Homestay families should not require authorization to bring an international student to a physician for a routine check-up or for a minor medical problem. A protocol should be in place for more serious medical emergencies, such as that requiring guardian consent. This process needs to be clearly outlined and communicated to the Homestay Coordinators, the students and the Homestay family members.
- **Student Privacy.** All students should have the right to essential privacy in their Homestay family. However, the Homestay family, at their discretion, reserve the right to search any room or item found within their home.
- **Body Piercing and Tattoos.** Guidelines need to be established around body piercing and tattooing. Based on the cross-jurisdictional review, it is recommended that students must receive written permission from their natural parents if they wish to engage in body piercing or tattooing. It should be clearly

stated that the Homestay program will not assume any responsibility for medical problems which may arise as a result from these activities.

Appendix A

QUESTION THEMES

School District Personnel

General

- Background and historical perspective
- Successes experienced to date: strengths of the program
- Challenges being experienced to date: plans to resolve these challenges
- Future directions

Homestay Program

- Specific background/historical perspective on Homestay Program
- Obtain existing policies and procedures – discuss current state, strengths, weaknesses and future intentions
- Homestay Coordinators: Current strengths and limitations for:
 - Recruitment/retention process, selection criteria and reimbursement
 - Monitoring mechanisms
 - Challenges facing Homestay Coordinators
 - Recommendations re policy/procedures
- Homestay Families: Current strengths and limitations for:
 - Recruitment/retention process, selection criteria and reimbursement
 - Background checks, including information required from CYFS
 - Monitoring mechanisms
 - Challenges facing Homestay Families
 - Recommendations re policy/procedures
- Communication/relationship with Student Family members and Agents
 - Information provided re Home Stay Program
 - Nature of ongoing communication re child's Homestay experiences
 - Events that might trigger communication with families/agents
 - Issues/challenges in this relationship
 - Policies that may be required
- Safety and security of Homestay Students
 - Areas of strength – where policies are working
 - Areas causing concern – where policy may not be sufficient
 - Sufficiency of authority for medical emergencies, misbehavior, travel etc. (informed consent, 24/7 access to custodian)
 - Areas of risk/liability and suggestions re how risk/liability should be mitigated
- Roles and Authorities: strengths, issues and recommendations
 - Role/authority of the school district
 - Role/authority of the Department of Education
 - Role/authority of other departments such as Justice
 - Role/authority of CYFS (at Regional Health Authority) and of Department of Health and Community Services
- Best practices

- Current best practices
- Other known best practices (e.g., other jurisdictions and/or school boards)
- Overall recommendations for moving forward

DRAFT QUESTION GUIDE

Homestay Coordinators

Explain the homestay program has been in place for some 6 years and it was felt it is time to take a look at policies and practices to ensure things are working well for all involved and where possible improvements could be made.

- How long a Home Stay Coordinator
- How made aware of opportunity for Home Stay Coordinator
- Description of recruitment process (including minimum qualifications if stated)
- Initial self-expectations of role and how aligned with current understanding of role
- Description of process of recruiting, screening Home Stay families. Strengths, limitations and challenges in this process
 - Description of family/family member checks. Enablers and barriers in this process
 - How a determination is made that a family may not be suitable (specifically reference CYFS checks)
 - Expectations of Home Stay families and how this information is communicated
- Description of role in obtaining documents, signatures (consent forms, etc.) Enablers and barriers to this process (specifically reference CYFS checks)
 - What is the current process for checking Homestay family references and related documentation
 - What is working well with this process
 - What needs to be improved
 - Who should be responsible for making this happen
- Description of matching process of students and families including:
 - What student information is provided and what is shared with Homestay family
 - Enablers and barriers to making good matches
- Description of supports offered to Home Stay families and students
- Challenges faced by Home Stay families: how are challenges identified and resolved
- Challenges faced by students: how are challenges identified and resolved
- Expectations for Home Stay Coordinators communication/home visits with Homestay Families and students. Strengths, barriers and recommendations.
 - Requirements for documenting (frequency, format, etc)
- Expectations for Home Stay Coordinators communication with families and guardians of students. Strengths, barriers and recommendations.
 - Requirements for documenting (frequency, format, etc)
- Description of concerns, if any, regarding assuring the safety and security of Home Stay students. Recommendations
- Description of process in event of medical emergencies, discipline, travel etc. Enablers, barriers and recommendations
- Thoughts about minimum qualifications and credentials of Homestay Coordinators.
Supports required for Home Stay Coordinators – e.g., orientation/training, etc.
- Description of significant rewards and challenges of being a Home Stay Coordinator
- Description of sufficiency of current policies and guidelines. Strengths, challenges and recommendations

Appendix B

Student Guide

Student (in small group format – 2-3 students)

This is intended as a guide only: The consultant's will modify language and question format to meet the needs of participants.

Introduction:

5 minutes

- Introduce self and function of a moderator/facilitator – to get your opinions; role of focus group discussions (all opinions are important; look for a variety of opinions; important to understand how you agree as well as disagree).
- Explain process of the small group discussion: round table discussion, not a questions and answer period.
- Explain the homestay program has been in place for some 6 years and it was felt it is time to take a look at policies and practices to ensure things are working well for all involved and where possible improvements could be made.
- Today we are going to talk about the Homestay Program and your experiences. Any questions?
- Participant introduction, ask them to introduce themselves including; name, where they are from, how long they have been in the Homestay program and the thing they like best about the Homestay Program.

Experiences with the Homestay Program

25 minutes

To begin, if you were describing the Homestay Program to one of your friends back home, what would you say?

Give participants pen and paper to jot down their thoughts

1-2 minutes

We will come back to what you just wrote down a little later in our discussion.

Tell me more about your experiences with the Homestay Program?

ASK:

- What do you like about the Homestay Program? Why?
- How would you describe the role of your Homestay Coordinator? (i.e., What do you expect this person to do to support you? Are these expectations being met?)
- How would you describe the role of the School District's International Education Program? (i.e., What do you expect staff to do to support you? Are these expectations being met?)

- How did you receive information about your Homestay Family? Was this information helpful? What other information would you have liked?
- How were you introduced to your Homestay family? (i.e., Did you receive any information before you arrived? Through the orientation session with the District?)
- When you signed up for the Homestay Program, what were your expectations?
- How did your expectations measure up to your actual experience?
- Do you feel your Homestay family is a good fit for you? Why do you feel that way?
- What activities, if any, do you do with members of your Homestay family?
- Have you ever changed Homestay families? **IF YES:** Tell me a bit about that:
 - Why did you leave?
 - What process did you have to follow?
 - How satisfied were you with the outcome? Why?
 - What, if anything, should have been done differently?
- What do you like least about the Homestay Program? Why? How could this be addressed?
- What, if anything, would improve the Homestay Program? Why?
- What, if anything is missing?
- What rules, if any, do you have to follow? How did you learn about these rules? What are your thoughts on these rules?

Have participants share what they had to say about the Homestay Program and probe as appropriate.

Improvements

25 minutes

As a group, we are going to begin to develop a series of rules and guidelines to make the Homestay Program as safe and secure as it can be for students like you.

- First of all, what do we need to do to ensure the Homestay students are safe, secure and comfortable? Why?
- What rules or guidelines need to be in place? Why?
- How would this make the Homestay Program better?
- What rules and guidelines would help overcome some of the things you don't like about the program? How would that be helpful?
- What else, if anything, would make the Homestay Program better?

Thanks & Closure:

On behalf of the Department of Education and the Western/Eastern School District, I would like to thank each of you for coming in and sharing your experiences with us. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C

Guide *Homestay Families*

Note: This is intended as a guide only. The consultant(s) will modify the tone and language as appropriate to ensure a comfortable and relaxed experience for all.

Introduction & Warm-up:

5 minutes

- Introduce self and function of a moderator/facilitator – to get your opinions; role of focus group discussions (all opinions are important; look for a variety of opinions; important to understand how you agree as well as disagree).
- Explain process of focus groups: round table discussion, not a questions and answer period;
- Explain confidentiality (no names in report, everyone's identity protected)
- Explain the homestay program has been in place for some 6 years and it was felt it is time to take a look at policies and practices to ensure things are working well for all involved and where possible improvements could be made.
- This evening we are going to talk about the Homestay Program in terms of the guidelines, policies and procedures. Any questions?
- Participant introduction, ask them to introduce themselves including; name, how long they have been a Homestay family and one exciting experience that they have had hosting International Students.

Perceptions and Awareness of Current Policies

15 minutes

To get started, I would like for each of you to take a moment and jot down what comes to mind when you think about the current Homestay Expectations, guidelines and policies.

*Provide each participant with paper and a pen to jot down their thoughts
Give participants 2-3 minutes to complete the task*

Before you share what you have written down...

- What policies (expectations) are currently in place for students in the Homestay Program?
- What are your thoughts on these (expectations) policies and guidelines?
- What do you find is working well?
- What, if anything, would you as a homestay family add that is missing?

Have participants share what they have written

Probe:

- Why does that come to mind?
- Why do you feel that way?

Homestay Family Challenges

45 minutes

We will come back to policies and guidelines later in our discussion. I would now like to learn more about the challenges you have faced or are facing as a Homestay family. In order to do this, I am going to get you to work in groups of two or three (depending on total number of participants).

Your task is to make a list of all the challenges and concerns you have faced as a Homestay family. You can talk to your partners, but you cannot talk to the other participants. You and your partners may have had similar events or experiences, that's okay, but you may have had different ones, which is fine too. The important thing is to capture all your experiences. I will give you eight minutes to complete this exercise. Any questions?

*Give each groups markers and a piece of flip chart paper
Give participants 8 minutes to complete the exercise*

As the Groups report back probe for:

- Why was this a challenge?
- How did you overcome it?
- What, if anything, would have been helpful?
- Where did you go for help?
- Which challenge was the greatest? Why?
- What challenges do you see were related to culture?
- Do you feel your Homestay student is a good fit for your family? Why do you feel that way?
- What activities, if any, does your student do with your family?
- Have you ever had a student leave/transfer to another family? **IF YES:** Tell me a bit about: that
 - Why did they leave?
 - What process did you have to follow?
 - How satisfied were you with the outcome? Why?
 - What, if anything, should have been done differently?

As a group review the challenges identified and highlight those related to student safety and security

Policies, Guidelines and Procedures

60 minutes

For the remainder of our discussion I would like for you to focus on those challenges we have identified as a group relating to student safety and security (*these challenges will be written on a separate piece of flipchart paper for all participants to see throughout the exercise*). I would like for you to work in pairs make a list of the policies, guidelines or procedures that need to be in place to address (prevent or mitigate) these challenges. Any questions?

Give participants 11 minutes to complete the exercise

As the Groups report back probe for:

- Why is this important to include?
- How would this be helpful?
- What supports are/were available and how helpful are/were these (e.g., orientation, communications, etc.)
- What needs to be in place to ensure the safety and well being of international students?
- Who should be responsible? Why?
- How should these policies, guidelines and procedures be enforced?
- What needs to be considered with respect to medical emergencies? Disciplinary action? Travel?

Those are all the questions I have. Are there any areas that you think are important to consider when developing policies and guidelines pertaining to the safety and security of Homestay students?

Thanks & Closure:

On behalf of the Department of Education and the Western/Eastern School District, I would like to thank each of you for coming in and sharing your experiences with us. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D

Homestay Review File Audit Checklist Students

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application completed			
Student meets grade requirement			
Coordinator's monthly reports up-to-date			
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face contact with student			
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face contact with family			
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with student			
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with family			
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with student			
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with family			
Terms of participation in the program signed			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
by student (code of conduct)			
Terms of participation in the program signed by natural parents (code of conduct)			
Emergency contact information provided to the student for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work & cell) School district School			
Emergency contact information provided to the student's natural family/agent for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work & cell) School district School			
Documentation of incidents/emergencies: <i>(if applicable)</i> Nature of incident/emergency Response provided			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Homestay Moves (<i>if applicable</i>) Request to change Homestay form completed Reasons for move documented Notification to agents/parents of move Follow-up report			
Immunization record			
CYFS and RNC checks completed prior to student arrival			
Student attended orientation			
Copy of student passport			
Copy of student study permit			
Academic records from Country of origin			
Academic records from host school			
Health insurance documentation			
Behavioural/disciplinary action (<i>if applicable</i>) Documentation of behaviour Actions taken Behavioural plan developed Behavioural contract signed Follow-up process Documentation of those involved and their responsibilities			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Parents/agents notified of disciplinary action and behavioural contract if applicable			
Travel outside the province (<i>if applicable</i>) Form signed by the natural parents Travel details (flight times and numbers, contact name and number at travel destination) Appropriate supervision provided			
Student handbook sent prior to arrival			
Information on Homestay family sent prior to arrival			
File title page including: Medical conditions/allergies/special conditions Emergency contact information Host family contact information Agent contact information			
Arrival Details: Date and time of arrival Travel details including airline and flight numbers Name of person to pick-up student			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Departure Details: Date and time of departure Travel details including airline and flight numbers Person taking student to the airport			
Agent information (name, address, email, telephone numbers)			
Is the consent for medical treatment form signed and in the file?			
Did the medical treatment form have to be used?			
Affidavit of custodianship			
Any report of suspected maltreatment by the student Nature of report Action taken Follow-up Who is involved/accountable			
Other documented issues on file			

Other:

- All documentation should include dates, time and the names of all of those involved.

**Homestay Review
File Audit Checklist
Homestay Families**

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application form completed (declaration and signature required)			
Criminal records within the last 2 years* Parents Children over age of 12			
CYFS checks completed on the family members completed within the last 2 years			
3 References Checked using a standard form			
In-home interview and inspection completed Household members present/absent Home inspection form completed Copy of the interviews completed			
Copy of acceptance/rejection letter			
Homestay family contract signed			
Code of conduct for the Homestay family received and signed			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Coordinator's in-person monthly contact with Homestay family is documented Contact notes document issues of concern and follow-up plan			
Phone or email contact with family during term More than once a month Once a month Less than once a month			
Emergency contact information provided to Homestay family			
Health insurance documentation provided to Homestay family			
Homestay family attended orientation			
Homestay family information provided to parents/agents/students			
Homestay application updated before placing student if application is inactive for two years or more			
Liability insurance in place and a copy of the policy in file			
Host school's assessment of Homestay family			

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
suitability			
Homestay family handbook provided			
Single Individuals (<i>if applicable</i>) Assessment of same sex opposite sex placements			
Homestay family and home photos on file			
Letter/form on file from host school re: school's relationship/interactions with family			
Homestay information provided to the schools			

* If there is a change in household composition, Homestay coordinator is notified immediately and appropriate checks completed. If there is any criminal charge or pending charge for any household member the coordinator is notified immediately and it is documented and actioned on the Homestay family file.

Other:

- All documentation should include dates, time and the names of all of those involved.

Appendix E

Agent Email

Hello INSERT AGENT NAME:

My name is Jean Cook and I am a Senior Associate with Jane Helleur and Associates Inc. Our firm has been engaged by the Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and our Eastern School District to conduct a review of the province's Homestay Program. The Homestay Program is a key component of the International Education Program for international students in Grades 7-12. Our aim is to further strengthen the program. As part of this review, we would like to learn more about the experiences of the agents who are involved in this program.

I have a few questions that should not take longer than 30 minutes of your time. Your comments and thoughts will be confidential and will not be tied to you. Rather we will combine your comments with others to protect everyone's identity.

You may wish to respond by e-mail, though we are as equally as happy to telephone you at a time convenient for you. Could you please reply to this email and let me know your preference?

Here are the questions we would like your thoughts on:

1. What are your thoughts on the type and amount of information you received about your students' Homestay family prior to your students coming to Newfoundland? We would be interested in your comments regarding the information provided on the:
 - a. Number of family members, their ages, names and occupations
 - b. Where they live
 - c. Description of the home and the student's bedroom
 - d. Presence of pets
 - e. Family interests and recreational activities
 - f. Is there any information you would liked to have received, but didn't?
2. Were you comfortable that the appropriate safety checks were completed on the Homestay family (i.e., police checks, child abuse checks)?
3. What concerns, if any, do you have regarding the selection of Homestay families? What, if anything, could improve this process?
4. Prior to your students' arriving in Newfoundland, how comfortable, if at all, are you with the matching process? Why do you feel this way? What, if anything, could be done to improve the matching process?
5. Throughout your involvement with the Homestay Program, have you ever had any concerns about a student's safety and security? Please elaborate.
6. Has a student of yours ever required movement to another Homestay family? If so, why was this necessary and how, if at all, were you kept informed of the process?
7. How often did you receive information about your students in the Homestay Program? Please comment on the quality and level of information you receive about the students' progress as well as anything that was missing.
8. What could improve the Homestay Program?

Thank-you so much for your time. Your comments are essential to the growth and success of a quality Homestay Program.

Appendix F

Guide

Provincial Government Officials

Introduction:

5 minutes

- Introduce self and thank participant for agreeing to participate in this study.
- Explain that the interview will be between 45-60 minutes.
- Explain the purpose of this interview is to learn more about their experiences with the Homestay Program. Any questions?

Experiences with the Homestay Program

20 minutes

- To begin, could you describe for me your understanding of the Homestay Program?
- What is your involvement with the Homestay Program?
 - How long have you been involved?
 - What is your role?
 - How would you describe your experiences to date?
- What do you consider to be the strengths of the Homestay Program? Why?
- What are the challenges or limitations?
- How can these challenges or limitations be overcome?
- What, if anything, would improve the Homestay Program? Why?
- What, if anything is missing?

Policies and Guidelines

30 minutes

I would now like to focus in on both the current and future development of policies and guidelines for the Homestay Program.

- Currently, what policies or guidelines are in place to ensure the safety and security of Homestay students?
- What are your thoughts on these policies and guidelines?
- What, if anything, is missing? Why is that important to include?
- Who should be responsible? Why?
- What should be the role of the school district? Why?
- What should be the role of your Department of Education? Why?
- What should be the role of other departments such as Justice and Health and Community Services? Why?
- How should these policies, guidelines and procedures be enforced?
- What needs to be considered with respect to medical emergencies? Disciplinary action? Travel?

Appendix G

QUESTION THEMES

Cross Jurisdictional Review

- Introductions
 - Thank for agreeing to participate
 - Tell the approximate amount of time interview will take
 - Let them know the discussion is confidential and their name will not appear in any subsequent report
 - Offer a copy of the final report
- Specific background/historical perspective on Homestay Program
 - Strengths
 - Successes
 - Weaknesses
 - Areas of concern
- Roles and mandates of ... (with regard to the Homestay Program)
 - Provincial government/Department of Education
 - School Boards
 - Other provincial government departments (e.g., justice, health)
- Level of accountability of school board to provincial government
 - How, if at all, is this level of accountability articulated?
- Discussion around existing provincial policies
 - What provincial policies are in existence?
 - What are the strengths of these policies?
 - What are their limitations?
 - What if anything is missing?
- Safety and security of Homestay Students
 - Areas of strength – where policies are working
 - Areas causing concern – where policy may not be sufficient
 - Areas of risk/liability and suggestions re how risk/liability should be mitigated
 - What issues, if any, have occurred with respect to the safety and security of Homestay students? How were they resolved?
- Legal guardian
 - Who is the legal guardian?
 - How is this authorized?
 - Sufficiency of authority for medical emergencies, misbehaviour, travel etc. (informed consent, 24/7 access to custodian)
 - What issues or challenges have you faced with respect to legal guardianship?

At the end of the interview, thank individuals for their assistance with this project and ask them if there are one or two school boards in their provinces that have good policies and guidelines around the Homestay program. Ask for contact names and phone numbers.

Appendix H

Summary of Homestay Review File Audits

Eastern School District Summary Students n=12

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application completed	10 (see note section)	1 (see note section)	1 of the 10 'yes' files the parent signed the application, but not the student For the 'no' file, the student is in their 3 rd year of the program, original application has been misplaced/misfiled.
Student meets grade requirement	12	0	
Coordinator's monthly reports up-to-date	11	1 (see note section)	For the 1 'no', the student file is missing reports up to and including Jan. 08. As of Jan. 08, coordinators began documenting the frequency and type of student contact.
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face contact with student	12	0	
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face	12	0	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
contact with family			
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with student	11	1	
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with family	11	1	
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with student	0	12	
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with family	0	12	
Terms of participation in the program signed by student (code of conduct)	9	3	
Terms of participation in the program signed by natural parents (code of conduct)	10	2	
Emergency contact information provided to the student for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work & cell) School district School	0	12	
Emergency contact information provided	0	12	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
to the student's natural family/agent for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work & cell) School district School			
Documentation of incidents/emergencies: (if applicable) Nature of incident/emergency Response provided	1 (see note section)	0	Student had a headache and was taken to the hospital. This was documented in the monthly report. N/A = 11
Homestay Moves (if applicable) Request to change Homestay form completed Reasons for move documented Notification to agents/parents of move Follow-up report	1 (see note section)	0	Request to move form signed and dated 12-18-07. Reasons for move documented, but no indication agent or natural parents notified. N/A = 11
Immunization record	5	7	
CYFS and RNC checks completed prior to student arrival	0	12	
Student attended orientation	7	5	
Copy of student passport	6	6	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Copy of student study permit	1	11	
Academic records from Country of origin	10	2	
Academic records from host school	11	0	N/A = 1 (student arrived Feb. 08)
Health insurance documentation	12	0	
Behavioural/disciplinary action (<i>if applicable</i>) Documentation of behaviour Actions taken Behavioural plan developed Behavioural contract signed Follow-up process Documentation of those involved and their responsibilities Parents/agents notified of disciplinary action and behavioural contract if applicable	1 (see note section)		Behavioural contract was on file and documented the actions taken, the plan to be followed, those involved and their responsibilities. Documentation indicates the agent and natural parents were notified. Contract was not signed by natural parents. N/A = 11
Travel outside the province (<i>if applicable</i>) Form signed by the natural parents Travel details (flight times and numbers, contact name and number at travel destination) Appropriate supervision provided	2 (See notes section)		Both students travelled during Christmas (one home and one to NS). Neither of these files contained the permission to travel form signed by the natural parents. N/A=10
Student handbook sent prior to arrival	0	12	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Information on Homestay family sent prior to arrival	10	2	Of those send info. The majority of letters were sent Aug. 6-7 th .
File title page including: Medical conditions/allergies/special conditions Emergency contact information Host family contact information Agent contact information	0	12	
Arrival Details: Date and time of arrival Travel details including airline and flight numbers Name of person to pick-up student	8 (see notes section)	4	Often times the arrival times of other students are on other students' files. File contained arrival times and flight numbers, but did not indicate person picking-up student.
Departure Details: Date and time of departure Travel details including airline and flight numbers Person taking student to the airport	3 (see note section)	9	All 3 files contained the departure times and flight numbers, but did not indicate the person taking the student to the airport.
Agent information (name, address, email, telephone numbers)	11	1	
Is the consent for medical treatment form signed and in the file?	0	12	
Did the medical treatment form have to be		12	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
used?			
Affidavit of custodianship	12 (see notes section)	0	12 of the 8 'yes's' were missing the signature of the natural parents.
Any report of suspected maltreatment by the student Nature of report Action taken Follow-up Who is involved/accountable	0	12	
Contact with agent/natural family Monthly contact Type of contact (written or oral)	0	12	
Other documented issues on file	6 (see notes section)	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athletic medical consent on file and signed by guardian. - Permission to travel for ski trip on file. - Student has ADD, but school not informed. School reports on file RE: academic concerns. - Emails from guidance councillor RE: student's grades. - Application to extend student study period on file. - Behavioural contract on file. - Reference to another student not receiving

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
			a study permit referenced in an email and appeared on another student's file.

Other:

- Eastern sends a letter to the host schools when the international students arrive and provides information on the student (name) and the contact information for the coordinator they have been assigned. A copy of this letter is placed in the students file. More than one student name on this letter.
- The principals complete a questionnaire on the international students attending their school. A copy of this report is placed in the student file. (More than one student referenced in the report).

Homestay Review
Eastern School District File Audit
Homestay Families
n=13

The number of Homestay families exceeds the number of Homestay students as a result of one student having moved from their original Homestay family.

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application form completed (declaration and signature required)	13	0	
Criminal records within the last 2 years Parents Children over age of 12	8 (see notes section)	0	Of the 8 'yes's: 1 – [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] –(Section 30 – ATIPPA). 4 – checks ran on parents, but not children.
CYFS checks completed on the family members completed within the last 2 years	0	0	13 – Request for CYFS check on file, but not the actual check.
3 References Checked using a standard form	13 (see notes section)	0	In one case actual references were not checked until 01-17-08.
In-home interview and inspection completed	13 (see	0	Of the 13 home inspections and interviews

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Household members present/absent Home inspection form completed Copy of the interviews completed	notes section)		completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 4 indicated the number of household members present. All 13 had a copy of the home inspection and completed interviews on file.
Copy of acceptance/rejection letter	0	13	
Homestay family contract signed	0	13	
Code of conduct for the Homestay family received and signed	0	13	
Coordinator's in-person monthly contact with Homestay family is documented Contact notes document issues of concern and follow-up plan	12	1 (see notes section)	Captured in student file.
Phone or email contact with family during term More than once a month Once a month Less than once a month	8	2	2- missing data 1-n/a
Emergency contact information provided to Homestay family	0	13	
Health insurance documentation provided to	0	13	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Homestay family			
Homestay family attended orientation	0	13	
Homestay family information provided to parents/agents/students	12 (see notes section)	1 (see notes section)	For the 12 'yes's' documented on the student files. For the 1 'no' student switched HS families, cannot determine what, if any, info. he/she received on the new family prior to the move.
Homestay application updated before placing student if application is inactive for two years or more	11	0	2-n/a
Liability insurance in place and a copy of the policy in file	see notes section	0	13=question on application, all responded affirmatively to the question.
Host school's assessment of Homestay family suitability	7	5	1 – Requested reference from principal, but principal did not know family well enough to comment.
Homestay family handbook provided	7	6	
Single Individuals (<i>if applicable</i>) Assessment of same sex opposite sex placements	0	3	10=n/a
Homestay family and home photos on file	0	13	
Homestay information provided to the schools	3	7	3=on student file

Homestay Review
File Audit Western School District
Students
n=12

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application completed	11	1	One student and their natural parent did not sign the application form. The student and parent name was typed and not written.
Student meets grade requirement	10	2	In one case the grade was whited out and in the other the grade could not be determined.
Coordinator's monthly reports up-to-date	2	10 (see notes section)	Several-to all reports were missing for all 10 files. Some of these reports had different dates, but the content was exactly the same as a previous month's report. The monthly reports from other Homestay students were placed in other students' files.
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face contact with student	0	12	
Documentation/frequency of face-to-face contact with family	1	11	
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with student	0	12	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Documentation/frequency of telephone contact with family	0	12	
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with student	1(see notes section)	11	The email was not dated inquiry re: knee injury/ortho referral and tutoring schedule.
Documentation/frequency of e-mail contact with family	0	12	
Terms of participation in the program signed by student (code of conduct)	10	2 (see notes section)	Both names were typed, not signed
Terms of participation in the program signed by natural parents (code of conduct)	10	2 (see notes section)	*Both names were typed, not signed
Emergency contact information provided to the student for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work & cell) School district School	0	12	Student handbook contains the contact information, but does not indicate whom to contact and for what purpose. Student handbook is on file, but it is not dated. There is no way of knowing if and when it was sent to the student, natural family or agent.
Emergency contact information provided to the student's natural family/agent for: Homestay family work numbers & cells Homestay Coordinator (home, work	0	12	Student handbook contains the contact information, but does not indicate whom to contact and for what purpose. Student handbook is on file, but it is not dated. There is no way of knowing if and when it was

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
& cell) School district School			sent to the student, natural family or agent.
Documentation of incidents/emergencies: (if applicable) Nature of incident/emergency Response provided			All 12 not applicable. Should be noted in one file it was evident that a student broke their arm skiing, but there is no documentation on file of the incident other than a brief reference in the January report.
Homestay Moves (if applicable) Request to change Homestay form completed Reasons for move documented Notification to agents/parents of move Follow-up report	3 (see notes section)	0	9 – N/A None of the 3 forms were signed or dated. None of the 3 files indicated they agent/parents were notified of the move and there were no follow-up reports on file.
Immunization record	1	11	
CYFS and RNC checks completed prior to student arrival	0	12	
Student attended orientation	0	12	
Copy of student passport	12	0	
Copy of student study permit	11	1	
Academic records from Country of origin	11	1	
Academic records from host school	11	1	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Health insurance documentation	9	3	
Behavioural/disciplinary action (<i>if applicable</i>) Documentation of behaviour Actions taken Behavioural plan developed Behavioural contract signed Follow-up process Documentation of those involved and their responsibilities Parents/agents notified of disciplinary action and behavioural contract if applicable	1 (see notes section)	0	11-N/A Behavioural contract on file, but did not have natural parent's signature. No documentation of follow up or responsibilities of those involved.
Travel outside the province (<i>if applicable</i>) Form signed by the natural parents Travel details (flight times and numbers, contact name and number at travel destination) Appropriate supervision provided	4 (see notes section)	0	8-N/A of the 4 'yes' files: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 1 had the request to travel form on file with their natural parent's signature. • Another file contained the form, but it was not signed by the natural parents. • It was evident from the file a student travelled to NS for Christmas, but there was no form or flight info on file. • 1 student has a flight itinerary on file and another had no student signature.

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Student handbook sent prior to arrival	0	12	
Information on Homestay family sent prior to arrival	4	8	Dates sent: June 19 th (2 students) July 13 th 19 th (1 student) January 22 nd
File title page including: Medical conditions/allergies/special conditions Emergency contact information Host family contact information Agent contact information	0	12	
Arrival Details: Date and time of arrival Travel details including airline and flight numbers Name of person to pick-up student	1 (see notes section)	11	No information on file with respect to who was picking the student up at the airport.
Departure Details: Date and time of departure Travel details including airline and flight numbers Person taking student to the airport	3 (see notes section)	9	Of the 3 'yes's' all contained departure date, time and flight numbers. None of the 3 indicated who was taking the student to the airport.
Agent information (name, address, email, telephone numbers)	3	9	
Is the consent for medical treatment form	0	12	

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
signed and in the file?			
Did the medical treatment form have to be used?	0	12	
Affidavit of custodianship	12 (see note section)	0	2 of the 12 files did not have dates and 1 did not have the seal and signature of the notary.
Any report of suspected maltreatment by the student Nature of report Action taken Follow-up Who is involved/accountable	0	12	
Contact with agent/natural family Monthly contact Type of contact (written or oral)	0	12	
Other documented issues on file	5 (see note section)	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undated email regarding the health status of Homestay Mom, no follow-up documented. Student questionnaire on file for many, but not dated. Purpose of questionnaire unknown and no follow-up to responses documented. Request for tutoring from natural family, but no follow-up.

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student homes sick: contact with agent documented. • School performance. • An 'acceptance form' for students was in each file.

Other:

- No indication that host schools have Dan's cell number.
- No indication of face-to-face or telephone contact with students on a regular basis.
- Some files contained a student evaluation form completed and dated by Linda Spingle.
- Noted in one file that a student attended a sleepover.

Homestay Review
File Audit Western School District
Homestay Families
n=15

The number of Homestay families exceeds the number of Homestay students as a result of three students having moved from their original Homestay family.

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
Application form completed (declaration and signature required)	13	2 (see note section)	1 of the 2 'nos' was on file, but incomplete in that the name of the applicant's fiancé's was not include as well as the applicant's D.O.B.
Criminal records within the last 2 years Parents Children over age of 12	8	1	Of the remaining 6 files reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 files contained checks for the parents, but not the children • 4 files contained checks for one parent, but not the other parent
CYFS checks completed on the family members completed within the last 2 years	6	5	Of the remaining 4 files reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 files contained CYFS checks for the parents, but not the children • 2 files contained CYFS for one parent, but not the other parent 2 checks revealed the homestay parent had

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
			<p>previous involvement with CYFS. There was no documentation on either file as to what the involvement entailed. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>-(Section 30 – ATIPPA)</p>
3 References Checked using a standard form	0	15	References were provided, but no indication they were checked.
In-home interview and inspection completed	10	5	<p>Of the 10 home inspections and interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no documentation of the number of household members present on any of the files. • 3 were missing the home inspection form. • 4 did not have copies of responses to the interview questions. • 1 file indicated the need for a second visit, but there was nothing on file to indicate it was conducted.
Copy of acceptance/rejection letter	0	15	
Homestay family contract signed	0	15	
Code of conduct for the Homestay family received and signed	0	15	
Coordinator's in-person monthly	7 (see notes	8	Of the 7 'yes's' 5 were missing more than one

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
contact with Homestay family is documented	section)		monthly report.
Phone or email contact with family during term More than once a month Once a month Less than once a month	4 (see notes section)	11	Of the 2 'yes's' there were 2 emails on file, but not dated. The other 2 remaining files indicated less than once a month contact via email.
Emergency contact information provided to Homestay family	0	15	
Health insurance documentation provided to Homestay family	0	15	
Homestay family attended orientation	0	15	
Homestay family information provided to parents/agents/students	4	11	Send: June 19 th and July 13 th (two students)
Homestay application updated before placing student if application is inactive for two years or more	0	0	N/A = 15
Liability insurance in place and a copy of the policy in file	0	15	
Host school's assessment of Homestay family suitability	0	15	
Homestay family handbook provided	0	15	Copy on file, but no evidence it was provided

ITEM	YES	NO	NOTES
			to family.
Single Individuals (<i>if applicable</i>) Assessment of same sex opposite sex placements			N/A = 13 Of the remaining 2 files: 1 is a single mother with a son 1 is a single mother with two children (gender unknown) hosting a male student
Homestay family and home photos on file	5 (see notes section)	10	Only photos on file were exterior photos of home.
Homestay information provided to the schools	0	15	

Appendix I

Cross-Jurisdictional Review -List of Documents/Programs Reviewed

Below is a listing of the documents and programs reviewed. While all documents reviewed are of relevance and merit acknowledgement those in bolded text are highly recommended and represent best practices.

- **Nova Scotia International Student Program Policy Manual 2007-2008**
- **West Vancouver District No.45 International Student Program: Application for Admission, Participation Agreement, Responsibilities, Homestay Regulations and Expectations**
- **Guide to Providing Homestay in Queensland**
- **International Programs Rewards and Risks. Canadian Association of Practical Study of Law in Education (CAPSLE) April 2007, written by Barbara Webster Evans**
- **Western Training Group Homestay Program: Host Family Homestay Agreement – British Columbia**
- Cowichan Valley International Education Program (BC)
- Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA)
- College Saint Charles Garnier, Homestay Guide for the International Student Program, Study Copy
- The University of Winnipeg Homestay Program
- Rotary Youth Exchange: A primer for Host Families
- Turtle Mountain School Division International Education Program: Homestay Guide
- Prairie Spirit School Division International Education Program: Homestay Guide
- PEI Agreement Respecting Homestay Coordination and Recruitment of International Students
- Louis Riel School Division: Homestay Student Handbook
- Louis Riel School Division: Homestay Family Handbook
- Homestay Program Guide for Parents, International Student Program, St. James-Assiniboia School Division, August 2006
- Atlantic Education International Inc. New Brunswick