STEP

Short Term Exchange Programs

Program Guide

Family to Family

For Multi-District and District STEP Chairs and Clubs

(NOT FOR STUDENTS)

What is STEP?

Rotary Short Term Exchange Programs (STEP) include Family to Family (F2F) Exchanges and CAMPS. This document deals only with F2F. STEP is a Rotary sponsored cultural exchange for high school students, usually during summer months. The STEP program is a family-to-family and club-to-club exchange experience. Students travel abroad, hosted by a family with a similar aged student and host that foreign student from the family they visit. (The students are matched.) A typical STEP exchange lasts two to three months; 4 to 6 weeks abroad and 4 to 6 weeks hosting. Times can be longer or shorter and not necessarily in conjunction with each other.

NAYEN recognizes the benefits of STEP as a stand-alone exchange program, and that STEP exchanges, when coordinated with Long Term, enhance the Long Term exchange program for the reasons below:

- STEP families must be vetted as a host family and can host a Long Term exchange student.
- About 10% of STEP students go on to do a Long Term exchange.
- The STEP program requires little Rotary Club expense, but does require Rotary Club commitment including supervision, assigning a counselor and coordination of one or two activities for inbound exchange students.
- It is a great way to get new or struggling programs back on track with Youth Exchange!

Procedural Overview

NOTE: NAYEN is putting this document together primarily for NAYEN members and the vast majority of them use YEAH (Youth Exchange Administration Hub.) For that reason, we refer to YEAH frequently in this document. If your District does not use YEAH, we also show a Manual process. Please refer back to your District Chair for details on how your District handles applications.

Districts and Clubs may recruit outbound STEP students usually from August through March to meet the application deadlines set by their District. We suggest you promote the STEP program and the Long Term program together; as two exchange options in your local schools, church groups and other youth organizations, as well as family and friends of Rotarians.

Considerations before accepting STEP Applications

There are a number of decisions your District must make before you can begin the Program. If you belong to a Multi-district that administers STEP, many of these decisions will already be completed.

- Make sure your District is certified by RI for both Inbound and Outbound Exchanges
    - If your District already does Long Term, then you are automatically Certified for Short Term
- Decide how Applications will be processed.
    - If your Long Term Program is using YEAH, then Short Term can also be done through YEAH.
    - Check with your District and YEAH Administrator to be sure the Short Term program is properly set up in YEAH.
- Decide who will make matches
    - If you are with a Multi-district that does this, then your job is much easier! If not, you will need to make arrangements with Countries to make matches.
    - NAYEN has a questionnaire you can use to choose potential STEP Trading partners.
    - There is currently no standard Exchange Agreement between Districts for STEP like there is for Long Term. However, Districts should communicate before matching begins so each one knows how the other operates and if your Programs are compatible.
- Decide how Travel will be handled. Will you require or recommend a Travel Agent or leave that to the families to arrange.
- Decide on a Rotary Certified Insurance plan and who will provide and pay for it.
- Make sure the Family completes a Host Family Application and Background Checks are run.
- Have a checklist for whoever does the home visit.
- Plan for an Outbound Student Orientation.
- Decide if you will survey your STEP Students during and/or after the Exchange.

Applications using YEAH database

Interested students can be given the link to the online STEP application in YEAH once applications are opened by your YEAH Administrator. Your local District or Multi-district will have the login link for their STEP Applications.

Be sure students know your District number! They will complete the STEP Application online and the STEP District Chair will be sent emails each time a student starts a new application, when they download a required form and once they have finished the application.

The District STEP Chair or Committee member should contact the student when they are first notified the student has begun the application. The process can seem complicated and having the help and support of a Rotarian will go a long way in getting complete information.

For the application to be finalized, the District Chair (or their designee) must review it to be sure the required supplemental forms have been downloaded and are properly completed.

Completed Online Applications should be printed so they can be signed by the local Club President, Club YEO or STEP Chair and the District Chair or STEP Chair. Once signed, the application is saved in YEAH to make up the Outbound Application Package to be submitted to other countries for matching. Many countries accept digital signatures.

The Club's YEO and/or District rep conducts an in-home interview with the applicant and family. The family must complete the Host Family Application also in YEAH. The link to the Host Family Application should be provided to the family.

Once the STEP District Chair reviews all the information, they accept the applicant and it is moved from being a STEP Outbound Applicant to a STEP Future Outbound. At that point, the designated District Country Contact is notified, reviews the application and begins the matching process.

Each District is responsible for complying with all Rotary International Certification processes (i.e.: host family application/background checks, etc.) Every volunteer involved with STEP is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all students. Ask your District Chair if you have any questions about certification.

YEAH Application Procedures

The YEAH STEP Application is like the Long-Term Program, but a little easier. In addition to the Online portion, which is completed by the student, there are three Required Forms that must be completed and uploaded into YEAH, plus the Passport:

- 1) STEP Medical Form (No Doctor's statement or signature is needed)
- 2) STEP Rules, permission and Guarantee Form (Requires student and parent's signatures)
- 3) Sending Club and District Signature page
- 4) Passport (or birth certificate)

- OPTIONAL - STEP Host Family notification form – (Completed once the Host Family Application is done.) This allows for an Indicator Light to go "on" once the Host family app is completed. This form is not necessary if you do not use Indicator lights in YEAH.

Country Choices

Districts should decide how to assign counties for their Outbound students. Many use County Coordinators or Contacts.

Students are asked to select from several countries in the Country Preference List in YEAH and should be willing to go to any of those. You should always attempt to place students in one or their top choices, but that is not always possible.

After choosing their top countries from the Country Preference List, the student should then place a **Y** in the Preference Column by each country they would consider going to, and an **N** after each of those countries they would not be willing to go to under any condition.

Some Districts add an additional option, "Surprise Me" on the form. The committee then assigns a match based more on the student match than the country.

Applications done manually (No automation)

NAYEN uses the EEMA approved application, which can be downloaded on the NAYEN website, YEO Resources.

This is a fillable PDF document that can be emailed to the student and completed on their computer. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT APPLICATIONS NOT BE HANDWRITTEN. This causes mistakes and many countries will no longer accept handwritten applications.

Ask your student to complete the application on their computer and once complete, print it out for signatures.

Once the application is complete, pictures and Passport attached; Student, Parent, District and Club signatures done, the application can be scanned and saved as a PDF so it can be sent to other countries for matching.

We suggest the final PDF be encrypted and password protected. When sending to other countries for matching, send the password in a different email from the one containing the application.

Costs

The exchange student/family pays program costs which are:

1. Multi-district Fee – If your Multi-district administers STEP, they may have a fee to be paid by the District. This may or may NOT include Outbound insurance, which is required but might be purchased separately by each student or by your District.
2. District Fee – You district may add additional fees . We recommend adding at least $100 to give your District funds for orientations, supplies and other items you provide to

your STEP students. District fees should also be used for training of volunteers by sending leaders to the NAYEN conference or other RYE training.
3. Airfare
4. Insurance – Rotary International requires Rotary Certified Insurance be purchased by all exchange student (Long or Short term.)
5. Emergency Fund and Spending money to include at least $200 emergency funds.

Making Matches

Making STEP matches is the responsibility of District or Multi-district. There are two types:

1) When our counterpart sends us an app first before receiving ours.
2) When we send an app first without knowing if there will be a match.
3) Simple inquiry to see if a counterpart has students to match

Matching

1) When your District is sent an application from our counterpart first, that is preliminary. The app is sent to an OB family to review and approve. Once the District Contact is informed of the approval, your District Contact sends the OB student app to our counterpart and asks their family to approve the OB match. Your counterpart has to get approval from their family before contact can be made. Once that approval is confirmed, the District informs the OB family the match is confirmed. Only then should the families begin making contact.

2) When your District sends an OB application to your counterpart first, you wait for them to send a match. Once one is sent, assume the IB Family has approved your OB student. Your District should send the IB match to your OB family for approval. Once the OB family approves the IB match, you can confirm the match with your counterpart. Once that is done, the families can begin making contact.

Districts or Clubs should tell the families NOT to make contact when they first receive an application. The family needs to review it, route questions to the District or Club rep, and then approve the match. All families should wait for the match to be confirmed before making contact.

There should only be one point of contact between your OB District and the IB District. The family as well as the District or Club officials, should not contact anyone overseas while matches are in process. This is the job of the Country Coordinator. Once matches have been confirmed, the families can begin making contact. We recommend no Rotarian other than Country Coordinator make contact with Rotarians overseas or students, because that can cause confusion. If contact is made, please cc your District STEP Chair.

Making Travel Arrangements

Each District must decide to what degree they want to be involved in arranging travel. Some Districts require a Rotary approved travel agent while others only recommend their use. Others do not get involved in travel at all.

NAYEN recommends that students use a Rotary endorsed travel agent. This allows Rotary to be involved if there is a missed flight and help if a student if stranded at an airport in an unfamiliar city.

There are two such Travel Agencies in the USA:

- It's Your World Travel – https://www.iywt.com/
- Tzell – https://tzell.com/

If the student uses their own travel agent, Rotary should limit involvement if there are any problems during travel.

Deadlines

Your District should choose an Application deadline, but if you are administered by a MD, you should check with them to find out about their deadlines.

- July-December – Most Districts open STEP applications in July or August for travel in the next summer.
- December - March – Districts must chose a deadline to submit applications. Any application received after the deadline will be returned or placed on an as needed basis.
- January-May – Matching takes place for STEP exchanges.
- May-August – Summer exchanges are completed.
- December-February – Split Exchanges happen for the Western Hemisphere student coming to North America.

Most Districts or MD work on placements on a first come, first serve basis. The sooner the District gets the completed application, the better the chances are for the student to receive their first country choice.

Promotional Sites and Materials

Districts and Clubs can put together many marketing pieces to help promote STEP.

NAYEN STEP Marketing Examples: www.NAYEN.org
Rotary International Website: www.rotary.org

Responsible Parties

Multi-District or District Responsibilities (Matching)

- Promote the program to District members and volunteers
- Establish Country Coordinators (Contacts) to work with counterparts
- Matching students with counterparts
- Verify each OB student has purchased insurance and provides travel dates
- Verify each Inbound student has purchased insurance and provides travel dates

District Responsibilities (Non matching)

- Promote the program to Clubs and prospective students
- Create DISTRICT STEP Information and distribute it to Clubs and prospective students – This should include a link to the STEP Application.
- Help students applying through the YEAH system to be sure the Application Package is complete and accurate.
- Approve the Outbound Applicant's online application. Your District Chair must provide permissions in YEAH to your District STEP Chair and any other co-chairs in order for them to have access to the YEAH system.
- Run background checks on all Host family members over 18.
- Collect fees from families and send required fees to your MD. (If applicable)
- Review Insurance Requirements with Student/Family and upload verification of purchase to YEAH.
- Be sure the hosting club assigns a counselor and provides appropriate oversight
- Provide at least one orientation meeting for STEP Students and Parents to explain the program in detail, collect fees, go over travel arrangements and any other issues associated with the program.

Sponsoring Rotary Club Responsibilities

- Work with District STEP Chair to get Applications completed in YEAH and all documentation uploaded.
- Conduct in-home host family interviews.
- Ensure that Inbound Student match attends at least one Rotary meeting (both inbound and outbound.)
- Coordinate one or two activities with the host family as desired for inbound (such as cook-out, movie, short trip to amusement park, zoo, etc.)
- Ensure Inbound match is welcomed upon arrival.
- Provide contact information to students (Included in Application) including:
    a) Host Club Counselor
    b) Host Club Youth Exchange Chairperson
    c) Host Club President

Conclusions

The Short Term Exchange Program (F2F) can be an important part of any District Youth Exchange Program. It is an option for students that are unable to do a year-long exchange. It can lead to more Long-Term students and can be an excellent way to get host families for the Long Term program. STEP fulfills the Rotary goal of making peace in the world, one student at a time.

NAYEN STEP volunteers are ready to help any District make their STEP program a success.

If you have questions about the STEP Program or have ways to make this document better, please contact us.

NAYEN STEP Committee Contact:

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