# STEP

## Short Term Exchange Programs

# Commonly Asked Questions

### For Multi-District and District STEP Chairs and Clubs

The **Commonly Asked Questions by Students and Parents** document will answer many of your questions and can be forwarded to families that inquire about either of the two Short Term Exchange Programs (Family to Family and Camps). Here are a few additional questions/answers just for **YEO's and other Rotary leaders**.

**What if a student asks which program they should apply for – Long term or Short term?**

- Both programs support the Rotary Youth Exchange mission to promote world peace and understanding and provide an international exchange experience, but they are very different in several ways.
- Long Term exchanges are focused on cultural immersion, creating a deeper understanding and appreciation of others, and language development. Often the greatest take away for long term exchanges is the personal growth and development of the individual student on exchange. Students on Long Term exchanges are hosted by families that may or may not have children. While close relationships are often made with host families, that is not the focus of the exchange.
- In short term Family to Family (F2F) Exchanges friendships are made between the matched students and their families. Participants share family life and culture with their match, and many participants make friendships that last a lifetime.
- The F2F experience is often a way to engage younger students (freshman/sophomores) or older students who may not have the time, desire or confidence to go away for a full school year.

**What are some other differences between a STEP vs. Long Term Exchange?**

- The Short Term Family to Family (F2F) Exchange is usually four to six weeks in another country with a matched partner and their family and then about the same length of time hosting in back here. The exchange usually takes place in the summer and attending school is not a part of the exchange. Long term exchanges are 10-11 months that include attending high school full time, usually in another language.

- Long term exchange students become fluent in another language and acquire a greater knowledge of the culture which is called cultural competence. STEP students generally get a great taste of their exchange country, but the focus is in building a lasting friendship with their matched partner and family.
- STEP applicants and their families must be excited about travel, comfortable with their child traveling alone, and ready to host a student for about a month in the summer. They should have the time to have special experiences and share their culture with the partner student in a warm and welcoming environment.

**What about STEP Camps?**

- First, make sure your District participates in the Camps/Tours option.
- The STEP Camp option is usually a 2–3-week theme-focused camp experience hosted by a club or clubs in the host country.
- Camp themes range from mountain hiking, archaeological digs to traditional culture immersion.
- Camps are comprised of students from all over the world, often intentionally limited to one or two students per country to create a unique international experience.

**What is the responsibility of our Rotary Club to sponsor a STEP exchange candidate?**

- Promote the opportunity for both school year long and summer short term exchange programs to students in your community.
- Meet and interview students and families. This starts the club's relationship with the family. All applicants should be interviewed by the club youth exchange committee before being recommended to the district for the exchange.
- Follow up with the student for signatures on club sponsorship paperwork, the host family guarantee form and any fees assessed by the district.
- Invite your STEP outbound and partner to a club meeting.

**What does it cost our Rotary Club or District?**

- There are little to no costs for the sponsoring Club and District. Students and their families pay fees to the District to apply and all costs for travel, insurance and spending money are paid for by the family.

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### For Students & Parents

**What are Rotary's Short Term Exchange Programs?**

• There are two STEP programs, Family to Family (F2F) exchange and Camps/Tours.
• F2F matches two students from different countries of the same age and sex with similar interests. Each student visits the other's home usually during the Summer months for 4 to 6 weeks each way.
• Camps are organized by specific Rotary Clubs or Districts and last between 2 to 4 weeks.

**Has the STEP Program been around very long?**

• Short Term Exchange has been popular in Europe for decades. It has become popular in North America for over 30 years.
• Many districts get involved with STEP to give more and younger students the opportunity to experience the life-changing benefits of youth exchange.
• Never has promoting world peace and understanding been more important. This is one of Rotary's prime focus areas.

**Who is a good candidate for a Family to Family Exchange?**

• Students ages 15-19 who are excited to learn about a different culture, try a new language and learn skills to prepare them for being an adult should look at STEP. Short Term Programs can help students build confidence before applying for a full school year (Long Term) exchange sometime in the future.
• Students who choose not to go on a school year exchange due to family, school, or extracurricular priorities.
• Students who have the time to spend with their matched partner while hosting. That means they are not working or too busy with summer activities. They also have a family that is excited to host and share their life and culture.
• Students who are curious, flexible, and excited to spend two months with their matched partner from another country.

**How is STEP different from Long Term Exchange?**

• STEP Family to Family (F2F) is approximately a two-month experience mostly held during the summer or school breaks vs. a 10 or 11 month experience where you would attend school in another country. STEP camps or tours are 1-4 week experiences.
• STEP generally does not require a visa and students will not be enrolled in school. Some STEP matches may, however, visit school for a few days depending on how school holidays match up.
• Family to Family exchange is just that – every F2F participant goes abroad and also hosts so the whole family is involved. The family must apply and be approved as a Rotary Host Family.
• Matched students and their families work out their exact exchange dates. Travel arrangements are determined by each sponsoring district. Participating countries may have special insurance requirements for participants.

**What does it cost to participate in STEP?**

• Each District sets fees for its STEP Family to Family and Camp/Tours program.
• In addition, the cost of the flight, insurance and spending money should be factored in.
• In 2026, the average cost of a Short Term exchange is between $4,000 to $6,000, plus any additional costs to host your matched student.

**What countries can I go to on a STEP exchange?**

• There are many partners from around the world. Exchanges work out more easily if the countries share similar school and vacation calendars. Students often can indicate their country's preference when they are interviewed. Countries in Europe, Asia and South America all participate in STEP.

**How are Family to Family matches made?**

• Country coordinators share participant information with each other including the applicant's sex, age, hobbies, and interests with preferred countries.
• If coordinators believe that the two students/families would be a good match, they will share basic information with the families to approve the match.
• Once both families approve being matched with each other, the match is finalized, contact information is shared and participants communicate with each other directly to make arrangements for the exchange.

**Can matches be between students of different genders?**

• Typically, students are matched with a same sex partner but mixed sex partners are possible and have been successful.

**If a student goes on a STEP, could they still go on Long Term Exchange?**

• Yes! Students are welcome to apply for Long Term exchange after STEP, and in fact, many do!

• Families approved as Host Families for STEP are eligible to be long term host families also.

**What are the exact dates of the exchange?**

• For F2F exchanges, dates are worked out between the two families based on school vacation dates or family travel opportunities. Exchanges are typically about 4 to 6 weeks in each country.

**How does STEP work with LGBTQ Students?**

• Rotary is an inclusive organization and works with students from all walks of life.

• Most of the time, the sexual orientation of a student remains private unless the student has concerns or questions about the exchange in this area. Speak to your District representative if this is a concern.

**How does STEP work with Handicapped Students?**

• Rotary will make every effort to make an Exchange happen for any student who has a strong desire to participate in the program.

Special accommodation can be made for certain types of handicaps.

**What are Split Exchanges?**

• Some countries, usually Southern Hemisphere (SH) will want their student to come during their summer (Dec/Jan/Feb.) In these cases, our student goes to the SH student during our summer months, (May/Jun/Jul/Aug) and the SH student comes during our winter months.

• These exchanges generally last longer than the typical 30 day/30 day STEP Exchange because our student can go for their entire summer and the SH student can come here for their entire summer.

• Efforts need to be made to accommodate the students during the times when their match might be in school.

**What are STEP Camp/Tour options?**

• Rotary Exchange Programs in many countries offer camps or tours that bring together students from around the world for a two- or three-week experience with students from other countries. Camps and tours are hosted by Rotarian groups and are often based on a sport or special interest theme such as hiking, biking, arts and cultural, etc.

• Camps and tours are announced throughout the year, but most are announced in early spring since most are held in the summer.

• Districts will need to develop a way to list and disseminate the camp offering information to interested students. The NAYEN STEP Committee is developing a Camps listing.

• Camp applications must be submitted by a district representative and not directly by applicants.

• Camp fees are paid directly to the camp. Directions for payment should be found in the specific camp information flyer.

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

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