

Travel Request Policy for Students and Natural Families

While on program, students may have opportunities for extra travel. World Link allows for students to travel if it maintains the safe travel policies required by the U.S. Department of State. The top priority for World Link is to provide safety and security for all students during the program year. World Link will work with students and host families on travel requests and appreciate the cooperation of the host family and student in ensuring safety guidelines are followed.

World Link reserves the right to deny travel requests for any reason.

Basic travel and safety guidelines:

- All students will require a passport for any airline travel.
- Any personal or recreational student travel expenses are not reimbursable by World Link.
- It is prohibited for students to solo travel to visit other students whether hosted by another placement organization or by World Link outside their cluster community. This request will be denied.
- It is prohibited for students to accommodate other students to travel to their host community.
- Students requesting host families travel significant distances to facilitate personal travel to visit relatives/friends is not a requirement of the program and may be denied.
- Students are not allowed to travel with private tour groups as they do not follow the Safe Travel Policies established by World Link and the U.S. Department of State.
- World Link strongly encourages host families purchasing tickets for students to travel with their family during the year to have cancellation insurance on their travel expenses. World Link cannot guarantee the student will utilize the travel purchased for them as there may be visa issues, early returns to their home country or changes in host families beyond the control of World Link.

***Do not purchase airline tickets for students without World Link approval.
World Link will not be responsible for any travel expenses used or unused by student.***

Public Transportation:

Students are not allowed to travel without their host family or an approved chaperon on any form of public transport. This includes buses, airport shuttles, light rails, subways/metros, trains, and ride-shares/taxis (Uber/Lyft).

Types of Travel: No Additional Approval nor Travel Request Form is needed.

- Travel with World Link or arranged by FLEX or YES Programs
- Travel with host family in the U.S.
- Travel with a school group.

Travel for a student is allowed when World Link, American Councils or Mobility International USA (MIUSA) is administering the travel arrangements and supervising the student. Students may travel alone when traveling on official program travel. Chaperones will be in major airport hubs to assist with travel changes and issues.

Adult escorts accompany students during the international portion of their flights when they arrive and depart the U.S. Arrival and departure travel are booked, managed, and supervised by American Councils or American Field Services Intercultural Programs (AFS).

Travel with a host family does not require any additional approval from World Link if the host family is present

during the entire travel. Contact the local coordinator with the plans for the travel with the student including dates, transportation, place of travel and telephone numbers to contact student.

A student may travel with another World Link host family without additional approval unless the student is required to pay a significant amount for the trip (airfare, lodging, etc.).

Travel with on a school trip does not require any additional approval from World Link. Contact the local coordinator with the plans for the travel and include dates, transportation, name of school official & telephone number and place of travel. The student may be eligible for \$100 reimbursement for school trip expenses if related to a leadership or learning activity.

Types of Travel: Additional Approval is needed. Travel Request Form MUST be submitted.

1. Travel with host family outside of the U.S.
 - a. This includes Canada and Mexico.
 - b. See additional notes below.
2. Solo travel to visit relatives/natural family friend in the U.S.
 - a. Relative or natural family friend must be considered a responsible adult of an appropriate age. All persons 18 years of age whom the student will be staying with will need to fill out and pass a background check.
 - b. Solo travel will not be approved if the student is missing school.
 - c. Dates of the solo travel cannot conflict with the goals of the program.
 - d. Students must have an adult escort them to the departure airport and must have an adult meet them at the arrival airport. Flights must be direct (no layovers).
3. Travel with church group or non-program related adult.
 - a. The adult will be required to pass a background check.

If missing school while traveling:

It is important for the student to limit the amount of absence days from school during the program year. If school days are missed, then the student will need to obtain a signature from a school official on the School Excused Absence Approval form.

1. Download or fill in the form at www.worldlinkinc.org > Families > Resources for Current Host Families > Student Travel Request form. You can also email travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org for this form or ask your local coordinator.
2. Form must be typed. Handwritten forms are not accepted. Fill in the necessary information on the Fillable PDF Form. Print and obtain a signature from a school official.
3. Scan and email the filled in and signed School Excused Absence Approval Form to travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org and copy your local coordinator.

Travel Request Form Submission Deadlines:

Domestic Travel: A travel request form must be submitted for any solo travel or travel with a church group in the U.S. **at least 30 days** prior to the start of travel.

International Travel: A travel request form must be submitted for any travel outside of the U.S **at least 60 days** prior to the start of travel.

How to Submit a Travel Request Form:

1. The student or host family sends an email to travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org with a brief

description of the travel request, including the following details:

- The type of travel the student requesting (see “Types of Travel”; 1-3 above)
 - Dates of travel
 - If the student will be missing school
2. The appropriate Travel Request Form(s) to fill out based on the information provided will be emailed back. The local coordinator and Regional Coordinator will be copied. The email will include any additional instructions for approval.
 3. The student or host family fills out the form(s) with all necessary information. All forms must be TYPED. Handwritten forms will not be accepted.
 4. Email the form(s) to travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org. From there, the National Staff will submit the Travel Request Form through the proper channels to obtain all necessary signatures for the travel request to be approved.
 - *Additional questions may be asked. It is important to monitor email and respond in a timely manner.*
 5. Once all documentation has been submitted, the approval or denial decision will be sent by email from travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org to the student and copied to the local coordinator and Regional Coordinator.
 - *Travel Requests must be approved by World Link, U.S. Department of State, and the natural family. Signature approval from the natural family is obtained by World Link through Washington D.C. and HUB office.*

Additional notes for travel outside the U.S.:

Travel Alerts: Visit the U.S. Department of State Travel Alerts website at www.travel.state.gov to see if country of travel is listed on this website. Students are not allowed to travel to locations listed on the alert list.

Visa Requirements: Contact U.S. Consulate for country of travel. It is the host family and student’s responsibility to know the visa requirements for international students. The student’s visa requirements are based on the home country of the student. Follow the process provided to ensure student obtains a necessary visa to enter the country outside of the U.S. It cannot be assumed students will be allowed to travel as rules are based on the citizenship of each traveler. Any expenses related to this process are the responsibility of the host family and/or student.

The student should also ensure they have multiple entry access to the U.S indicated on their passport.

Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-Non-Immigrants) DS-2019: Once the request is preliminarily approved, the student will receive a signed copy of their DS-2019 via email from the appropriate person in Washington D.C. The host family will be copied on this email. The signed DS-2019 needs to be printed and stapled to the student’s original DS-2019. This certificate is typically found in the student’s passport. It is important to take this, their passport, and any other important documentation during travel. The signed DS-2019 is what allows the student to reenter the U.S.

Supplemental Insurance: Supplemental insurance for the student during their time of travel outside the U.S. will need to be purchased and a copy will need to be sent to travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org. The student’s health benefit plan does not cover the student while traveling abroad. This expense is the responsibility of the host family and/or student.

International Cruises: The Travel Request Form must list all ports included during the cruise.

Contact During Travel: The local coordinator and program must be able to contact the student during travel. Please provide the local coordinator with a working phone number they can use to reach the student.

Travel Policy simply put -

During their program year, if a student is traveling outside the U.S., traveling without an adult, or traveling with an adult who is not their host parent or affiliated with the program- a Travel Request Form MUST be submitted for their travel to be officially approved.

To start the process, the student/host family needs to email travelrequest@worldlinkinc.org. Forms and detailed instructions will be given at that time.

Deadlines for requests: Domestic travel – 30 days prior; International travel – 60 days prior

Natural Family Visits:

As stated before, natural family or relative visits are strongly discouraged by World Link, especially prior to November 1st, and must be approved by World Link. Unauthorized travel and visits will constitute leaving the program.

Contact the local coordinator to let them know about a natural family who is asking to visit their son/daughter/relative in the U.S. while on program. Encourage the student to tell the natural family to request approval through their country's HUB office. The request will come through the communication channels for the natural family visit.

World Link is not responsible for reimbursing the cost of tickets or other travel expenses associated with travel not completed due to the student not utilizing the travel purchased for any reason. This includes travel not occurring due to visa issues, host family changes, early return, or travel expenses purchased before approval by World Link and the U.S. Department of State.