



Yeshiva of Greater Washington- Tiferes Gedaliah

Policies and Procedures for Host Families  
of Out-of-Town Students

December 2014

## **1. Introduction**

The mission of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington-Tiferes Gedaliah (YGW) is to plant Torah as a lifelong guide within each student and to provide the skills to succeed personally, professionally, and communally.

YGW offers a broad curriculum in terms of *Limudei Kodesh*, comprehensive general studies (mathematics, science, history, English, and Hebrew language), and advanced placement courses as compared to a typical institution in the “Yeshiva world”. This broader curriculum is attractive to Torah observant families beyond the local community.

As part of considering the prospect of offering qualified out-of-town students an opportunity to attend YGW, a comprehensive approach to admissions and student housing has been carefully evaluated and developed. The goal is the establishment of a strong framework and more stringent criteria for out-of-town student admissions along with housing that is consistent with YGW’s mission and that will be successfully implemented and sustained over the long-term.

The YGW Board of Directors, senior administrators and the former *Va’ad Ha-Chinuch* worked together on the development of this approach to admissions and student housing. The focus of this document is the framework for the housing of out-of-town students.

## **2. Challenges in Hosting Out-of-Town Students**

In a traditional boarding school, the institution provides a comprehensive support structure to the student as part of the academic mission. This support structure includes formal supervision (particularly during after school hours), dormitory, meal plan, student counseling, and extracurricular activities. However, YGW does not have the physical, financial or organizational infrastructure to offer housing, food services and uninterrupted after-hours supervision of out-of-town students.

In the foreseeable future, YGW will need to partner with families to host out-of-town students. To this end, YGW will need to recruit and match prospective local host families with out-of-town students. In partnership with the school and out-of-town student parents, host families will play a critical role in the successful experience of these students at YGW.

Even under optimal circumstances, there are distinct challenges for an out-of-town student. In this context, the student is living away from home without direct day-to-day parental supervision and the family structure provided to a typical in-town student.

## **3. Management and Oversight of Host Family Program**

Hosts provide a home that enables out-of-town students to attend YGW. Out-of-town students will be in grades 9 through 12, which nominally covers an age range from 14 to 18 years.

Hosting entails both responsibilities and opportunities. From a physical perspective, host families provide a safe home, nutritious food, and access to other basic needs. From a *chinuch* perspective, host families provide stability, guidance and social support in a Torah observant household. When successful, hosting can have a significant positive long-term impact on the life and Torah observance of a student along with many potential positive benefits to a host family such as the merit of helping the next generation grow in Torah, the satisfaction of helping a young person succeed, and the creation of a life-long friendship.

However, good intentions alone do not guarantee positive outcomes. In providing the framework for student success, YGW staff, host families and out-of town student parents need to develop an effective partnership with clear expectations and open lines of communication. To this end, YGW has created a well-defined process for management and oversight of host families.

The process for YGW management and oversight of host families would entail the following steps:

- (1) Identification
- (2) Evaluation
- (3) Selection
- (4) Matching
- (5) Orientation and Training
- (6) Monitoring and Communications
- (7) Exit Interview

Implementation and administration of this process will be performed by an OSP Manager under the oversight of the Menahel. The OSP Manager will be required to have demonstrated professional experience, as an educator and administrator, in working effectively with high school students and families. Strong skills in interpersonal communications, problem-solving, and enforcement of school standards will be essential for this position. The scope and resources needed for this position would ultimately be a function of the size of the YGW OSP.

The primary focus of the process presented in the following sections is on the host family. Expectations, policies and standards applicable to out-of-town students and their parents are contained in other documents.

### **3.1 Identification**

The first step entails identification of prospective host families. The OSP Manager will serve as the responsible individual for conducting the identification process. A primary source of host family candidates is anticipated to be current and prior host families that are in good standing. Good-standing is defined as families that have been successful in hosting out-of-town students. New host families can be identified through recommendations from the Rabbinic Governance Board [RGB], school administrators, YGW faculty, YGW parents, and

the families of the out-of-town students. YGW can also seek recommendations from rabbis of Orthodox *shuls* in the local area. The output of the identification phase is a list of prospective host families for evaluation and selection.

YGW will consider students living with an immediate family member over the age of 25 (defined as Siblings, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and 1st Cousins) in the DC metropolitan area as a local student and not part of the boarding program. However, these students may participate in boarder activities and the family may reach out to the OSP Manager as a resource as needed.

### **3.2 Evaluation**

The goal of the evaluation process is to apply established criteria for evaluation and screening (with criteria elucidated below) of prospective host families. An evaluation interview will be conducted by the OSP Manager. The output of the evaluation process will be a written report by the OSP Manager based on an interview and home evaluation with the prospective family. The report will conclude with whether the host family is recommended for selection.

For those families recommended for selection, a background and reference check will be performed. After successful completion of the background and reference check, the recommended family will be submitted for selection.

#### **3.2.1 Host Family Eligibility Criteria**

- Demonstrates maturity, respect, commitment and understanding of the responsibilities and obligations of hosting an out-of-town teen-aged student.
- Stable family relationships.
- Good physical and mental health.
- Provide clean semi-private room, with their own bed, personal storage space, desk in quiet area suitable for studying, and access to common living areas.
- Provide plentiful nutritious meals and snacks.
- Provide safe transportation to and from school, and/or participate in carpools.
- Adhere to the guidelines set by the Rosh HaYeshiva on adolescent children or unmarried adults of opposite gender living in the home.
- Provide three personal references (including one from a local Orthodox rabbi).
- Sign a host family code of conduct agreement.
- Commit to maintain privacy and confidentiality of out-of-town students with regard to the community in terms of adherence to the laws of *Shmiras Halashon*.
- Attend mandatory orientation training.

- Submit to a home evaluation by the OSP Manager.
- Agree to periodic home visits throughout the school year by the OSP Manager.

### **3.3 Selection**

The OSP Manager will forward to the Menahel the results of the evaluation of a prospective host family that is recommended and vetted for selection. The Menahel will review the documentation and may conduct follow-up discussion with the OSP Manager and the potential host family as needed. The Menahel will approve and sign-off on all families selected to serve as hosts.

### **3.4 Matching**

The OSP Manager will seek to match an out-of-town student selected for admission to one of the approved host families. In addition to being involved in the host family selection process, the OSP Manager will be involved in the out-of-town student admissions. Based on consultation with the admissions committee and the out-of-town student and their family, the OSP Manager will endeavor to match a host family that would be most compatible and suited to meeting the needs of the student including communicating all pertinent information to the host family about the potential boarder.

### **3.5 Orientation and Training**

Prior to the beginning of an academic year, host families selected and matched to participate in the program, will attend a mandatory orientation and training session coordinated by the OSP Manager. The objective of the pre-service orientation training is to establish the framework for success for our out-of-town students and host families. Topics to be covered in this orientation and training include the following:

- Overview of YGW Educational Mission;
- Introduction to the YGW Out-of-Town Student Program;
- Role and Responsibilities of the Host Family;
- Clarification of what Host Families must report to the school;
- Strategies for a Successful Experience for the Host Family and Student ;
- Family Dynamics with Hosting: Balancing Inclusion and Privacy;
- Effective Communications between Host Family, YGW and Students' Parents;
- Overview of YGW Behavioral Standards;
- Laws of *Shmiras Halashon* and Mandatory Reporting Laws;
- Safety and Supervision of Teenagers;
- Nutritional and Dietary Needs of Teenagers;
- Introduction to YGW Staff Members involved with the Out-of-Town Program.

The scope and content of this training and orientation may be modified based on input from subject matter experts. Conduct of the orientation and training would be coordinated by the OSP Manager. In the event that the host family cannot attend a training session, they may make up the material with a private session.

### **3.6 Monitoring and Communications during the Academic Year**

A key element of the program's success will be in maintaining effective communication between the host family and YGW during the academic year. The OSP Manager will serve as the primary point of contact. The OSP Manager will make contact with each host family on a monthly basis. In addition, the OSP manager will be in regular contact with each OOT student and their parents, but talk with them no less than once a month. The efforts of the OSP Manager will be augmented by the Madrich(im), who will engage the OOT students in non-school time programming.

At least twice a semester, the OSP Manager will visit each host home and meet with both the family and the student. The OSP Manager will also meet with each student once a semester at school to ask them about their housing

In addition, the OSP Manager will identify appropriate opportunities to show appreciation to the Host Family and will be available throughout the school year for additional appointments and phone calls for guidance.

The OSP Manager, a senior administrator or faculty member will generally contact the host within 24 hours to address issues or problems raised (by the host family) concerning the student. If the matter is of an urgent matter, students, parents, and hosts will have a progressive communication chart that will allow them to reach a staff member. The Menahel will be directly informed of disciplinary issues or non-compliance with YGW rules and regulations concerning the student. Disciplinary and non-compliance issues will be addressed by YGW based on applicable policies and procedures.

### **3.7 Exit Interviews**

Toward the end of the academic year, the OSP Manager will meet with host family and student separately, and conduct an exit interview. The exit interview will be documented. The OSP Manager will assess and recommend whether the family should continue as a host family in the program in future years.