Homestay Hosts of Saudi Students Focus Groups

Working together to build complete homestay solutions.

December 2009
Some Host Observations

- Hosts Australia wide are a very diverse group
- They are generally passionate about what they do
- They love being involved and being heard
- They have developed individual hosting strategies
- They responded well to support and ideas
Key Finding 1

What homestay hosts found enjoyable about hosting a Saudi Student:

The vast majority of hosts reported very enjoyable and positive experiences with Saudi students when the student was committed to participating in the cultural exchange.

Hosts generally had a genuine interest in learning about the student’s life and culture and enjoyed assisting the student participate in the Australian way of life.
Key Finding 1 - Continued

What homestay hosts found enjoyable about hosting a Saudi Student:

*Hosts reaction to what they enjoyed about Saudi students were often stated as the students being:*

- reliable
- respectful
- caring
- polite
- honest
- involved in “family life”.
Key Findings 2

What homestay hosts found difficult about hosting a Saudi Student:

Clear issues emerged regarding:

- use of water/bathroom
- cleanliness
- lack of respect for women
- sleeping habits
- party culture
- noise levels late at night (on phone/internet)
Key Findings - Continued

What homestay hosts found difficult about hosting a Saudi Student:

Clear issues emerged regarding:

- Hygiene
- meal time punctuality
- ‘servant’ expectation and
- lack of knowledge/preparation of the Saudi student for the homestay experience in Australia
Hosts prior knowledge/training re Saudi student’s culture:

*Lack of prior knowledge/training of hosts is a clear issue.*
*Successful placements often resulted when the host had gone to some trouble to understand the culture of the student prior to arrival.*

*Hosts who did prepare generally did this as their own initiative using internet however some support was evident from some Homestay Supervisors in preparing hosts.*
Key Findings 4

Students prior knowledge/training re: Australian culture/homestay:

A major issue is clearly the lack of the preparation of the Saudi student before they arrive in Australia.

Where a student did preparation and was willing to participate in the cultural exchange there were more positive outcomes.
Key Findings 5

What Saudi Students learned from Homestay Hosts:

In most cases genuine positive learning experiences for the students were reported by hosts. These centred on the cultural exchange opportunities.

Prominent areas of learning included: understanding equality of Australian women, personal responsibility and tidiness, and improvements in learning English.
Key Findings 6

What Australian Homestay Hosts learned from Saudi Students:

There were some mixed responses here as some hosts had experienced a ‘bad’ placement.

The main learning here for hosts was the knowledge gained from the cultural exchange experience (diet, family, religion, lifestyle, etc.) which was positively received.
Key Findings 7

Best ways to solve problems:

All Homestay Hosts encouraged formal discussions with students as the best way to resolve any issues.

For major issues referral to Institution/Homestay Supervisor was seen as the preferred option.
Summary of Those Responding to Question 8

- **Group 1:** 9+, 1, 10, 10, 3, 8, 10, 7, 9, 10
- **Group 2:** 8, 4, 10, 10, 10, 8, 8, 8, 8, 5
- **Group 3:** 7+, 9, 9
- **Group 4:** 8, 8, 7, 9, 10, 9, 8, 7, 4, 7, 10
Key Findings 9

Key Finding 9 – Having a Saudi student again in Homestay:

There was very strong support for having a Saudi student again (90% of participants) and most hosts reported that they would be much better prepared for having already had a Saudi student in Homestay.
Conclusion

- Significant improvements and change is possible through properly planned cultural and “issues” education and orientation programs for Agents, Students, Hosts and Institutions.

- It is recommended that these be developed for this group and that further focus groups are held to establish strategies for other cultures participating in homestay in Australia.
Questions
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