



Welcome to Brazil!

A guide to AFS participants hosted in Brazil

Desde 1956 conectando vidas e
compartilhando culturas

Bem-vindo ao AFS Intercultura Brasil

Dear AFSSer,

Welcome to AFS Intercultura Brasil!

This guide is as a resource for you to prepare to your AFS year in Brazil and also to consult during your exchange experience! We recommend that you print it or save it in a special folder on your computer/tablet. There is a lot of important information here that you might need to consult during your stay.

This guide is designed to give you a brief introduction to the Brazilian culture and to provide you with basic information about AFS experience in Brazil - this includes **rules** and **information about health and safety**. You will receive additional local information from your local chapter and during your arrival orientations. We will also keep in touch with you from the National Office (Secretaria Executiva) by e-mail every other month.

We hope this handbook will assist you with helpful information for you to make the best of your intercultural experience in Brazil!

Abraços,

Secretaria Executiva
AFS Intercultura Brasil

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About AFS Intercultura Brasil

AFS Intercultura Brasil is a member organization of AFS Intercultural Programs. As you already know, AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.



AFS Intercultura Brasil has a body of around **700 hundred volunteers**, mostly young volunteers - who in its majority are returnees from AFS programs. But there are also volunteers from a variety of ages and different levels of experience. After all, AFS started its activities in Brazil on 1956.

AFS Intercultura Brasil volunteer structure is split into **10 Regions** and a total of **76 local chapters**. It might occur that the chapter structure differs a lot if compared to the one you are used in your home country, therefore, DO NOT expect to have the same activities. On the other hand, the volunteers will be happy to have you participate as much as you can. Feel free to offer your help and ideas.

You will have an AFS **contact person** at the local chapter (usually called counselor or liaison, in Portuguese “conselheiro”): someone who will be there to share the joys of your stay and help you understand the cultural differences you will face, at school, in the family and in the hosting community.

There is also a **LCP** (local chapter president) you can refer to as well. The regional structure is filled with 2 Regional Directors for each region and a Regional Counselor in charge of specific counseling situations.

Our **National Office** (Secretaria Executiva - SE) is also part of your experience and is available to support you. Reach us on office hours, Mondays to Fridays, from 9:00 to 17:00. When contacting the office you should ask for the Support Area: the Support Consultants or the Coordinator will be happy to assist you!

AFS INTERCULTURA BRASIL

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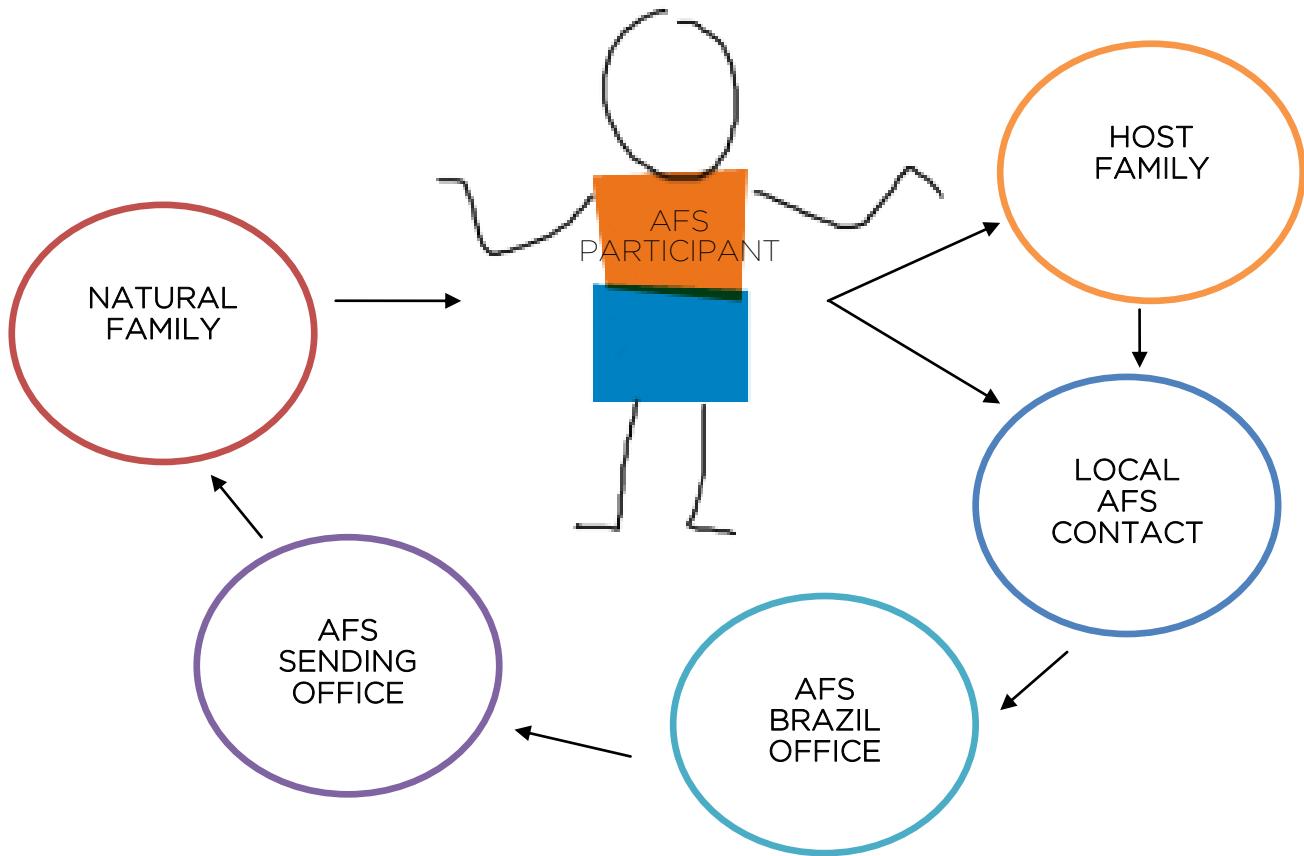
Support Structure

AFS volunteers throughout Brazil make the exchange program possible for you. These volunteers provide a variety of important services, including orientation, guidance, counseling and support for students and host families. At the Arrival Orientation you should receive the name and phone number of the volunteers assigned to provide you with support throughout the year (conselheiro).

Each chapter also has a local chapter president (presidente de comitê) who is also a local contact. Either the counselor or the local chapter president area available to speak with you whenever you have questions or concerns. Please have their names and phone numbers in hand.

Remember that whenever you have a problem you should go first to your HOST FAMILY and your LOCAL CONTACT PERSON, this way the problem is more quickly resolved because it follows the AFS support communication flow. If you contact your natural family first, the problem will become more complicated because more people will have to pass the word along before it can be dealt locally.

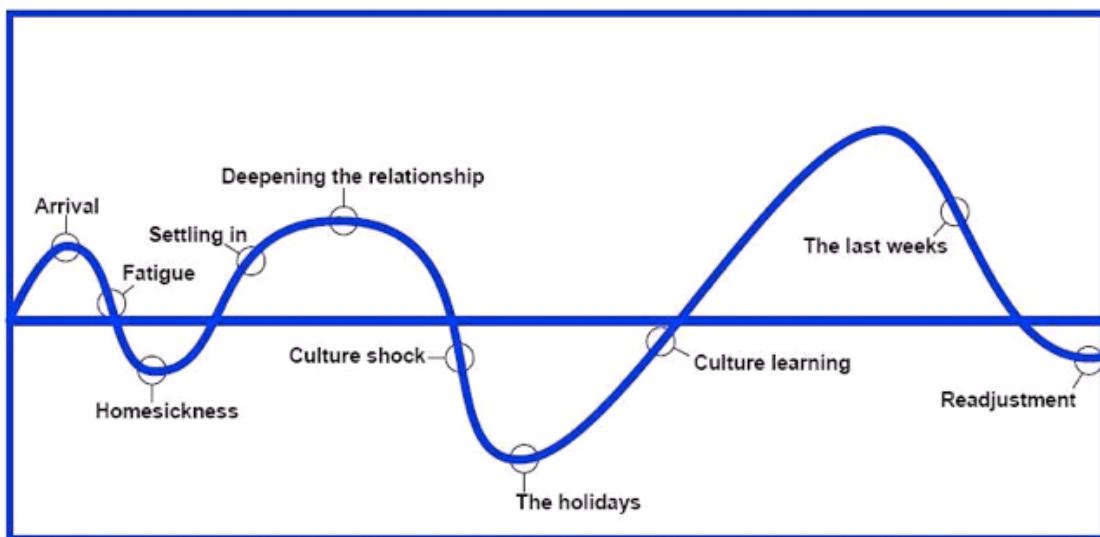
AFS SUPPORT COMMUNICATION FLOW



Our **National Office** (Secretaria Executiva - SE) Office is also available for you to reach in case of a support situation. The office works Mondays to Fridays, from 9:00 to 17:00. When contacting the office you should ask for the Support Area: the Support Consultants or the Coordinator will be happy to assist you! But remember, the best way to solve your problems is talking to those closest to you: host family and local volunteers.

Orientation Program

Adjustment and difficulties are a normal and important part of the intercultural exchange experience. AFS Orientations are scheduled at critical times of the year taking into consideration the adjustment cycle through most of exchange participants go through. The AFS orientation cycle provides participants and host families with a framework for structured support and practical information.



AFS has long understood that our program participants have different learning needs at different stages in their experience and AFS' Orientations are organized to provide support to participants and host families at those times of peak difficulty. For each AFS participant, part of the orientation program is provided by the sending Partner (Pre-Departure Orientation and Reentry Orientation) and the other part by the hosting Partner (Arrival Orientation, Post-Arrival Orientation and Pre-Return Orientation).

During the first two weeks at the hosting community, local volunteers will offer an **Arrival Orientation**. Its objective is to outline various important elements of your stay and give you hints on adaptation into your host community and make you more familiar with it, besides reviewing needed information.

Approximately 8 to 10 weeks after your arrival you will participate in a regional, weekend long **Post-Arrival Orientation** where you will have the

chance to exchange your views and learn more about cultural differences as well as develop a deeper understanding of the Brazilian culture.

Then, 6 to 8 weeks before you leave, you will participate in a regional, weekend long **Pre-Return Orientation** focusing on the last moments of your stay among us and you expectations towards returning home.

The purpose of our Orientation Program is to minimize the effects of culture shock and to support your intercultural learning experience. Your attendance is therefore mandatory!

Before Your Depart

Learning the language: on-line Portuguese lessons!

On 2013, we started to offer on-line Portuguese lessons from Rosetta Stone to all participants hosted in Brazil three months before their arrival. This course aims to support a fast learning of the Portuguese language and to facilitate the cultural adjustment process. Rosetta Stone on-line courses platform combines an advanced interactive technology with a fun visual environment that stimulates the language learning process. By taking the course the participant will learn basic language skills that will help them on the initial communication with host family and local friends.

Do your best to study and practice as much as you can. Remember: the more you know at the beginning of the program, the more you get out of it!

Portuguese is a fascinating and musical language as you will soon find out! It may sound difficult in the beginning, but it will come to you little by little. Your host family is being instructed to help you whenever needed. Even if some members of your host family or other people you will meet are able to speak a foreign language, try to talk in Portuguese as much as you can and keep your ears and eyes attentive to the way people talk. Brazilians use a lot of body language along with the verbal message, besides it is very common to use eye contact and touching each other in the arms and shoulders while talking.

Yellow fever vaccine

For foreigners who are coming from certain countries, an International Certificate of Vaccination against yellow fever is required*. Those countries are: Angola, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, French Guiana, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guiana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Venezuela. However, AFS Brazil recommends that all participants coming to Brazil get a yellow fever immunization prior to arrival. Please consult with your physician, Health Department or the vaccination center in your country in order to be informed how to proceed. The immunization is effective 10 days after the shot and you will get an International Certificate of Vaccination valid for 10 years.

* Brazilian FDA Regulation RE nº 1492, issued May 28th, 2007.

Money

Money makes the world go around. Since you will not be receiving any allowance from AFS, nor from your host family, we suggest that you bring around US\$1,500 to face your own personal expenses such as postage, paper, birthday presents, movie tickets, etc. for a year long stay. This amount does not include the extra costs of optional trips that you might be interested in taking part during your stay (detailed information in [Optional trips](#) section). It is possible that your family pays for things like your postage, etc., but they do not have to; if they offer to do it, it is a favor that they grant you. Similarly, your family may buy soap, shampoo, etc. for you - but if they don't, do it yourself graciously. They open their home to you, but you cannot expect their hospitality to be unlimited. Once you are here, we strongly suggest that you keep your money separate from the host families so as to avoid possible misunderstandings.

Your student visa does not allow you to work, so make sure you won't accept any kind of job earning money, as this will lead to your early return.



If your natural family plans to send you money during your stay, the best way to do it is through a “bank draft”. Whatever currency is sent to you, it will only be available in the national currency, at the official rate. Sending cash by regular mail is not at all advisable. What has been showed to be an effective way to withdraw money sent from an abroad account is using a bank card when needed. Bringing a credit card with you is also a valid option to withdraw money from ATMs (or money machines). However, this kind of service is generally more easily accessed in big and medium size cities. It is also important to emphasize that “Western Union” is not a kind of service available in Brazil for those who are under 18 years old. Visa Travel Money cards are currently the most used options.

Packing Aid

Being a continental country, the weather in Brazil varies quite a lot from region to region. Therefore, our suggestions here will depend on the area where you will be hosted.

North - Cotton dresses, jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sneakers, sandals, bathing suits, light pajamas/night gown.

Northeast - Cotton dresses, jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sneakers, sandals, bathing suits, light pajamas/night gown. A sweat shirt is advisable in case of a cooler day.

Southeast - Same summer clothes as above, but also winter clothes that may include wool jackets, socks, sweaters, sweat shirts, flannel pajamas/night gowns. Students staying in São Paulo and Minas Gerais should bring even warmer clothes.

South - Same summer clothes as above, but winter clothes should be heavier. The winter in those areas is stronger than in the rest of Brazil and houses usually do not have heaters!

Mid-West - Same as for the Southeast.

We suggest you also bring a pair of nice shoes for special occasions. Boys should bring a pair of trousers and a jacket to match, while girls might need a couple of nice dresses (nothing too formal though). You may keep in mind the fact that Brazilian teenagers are quite into fashion trends. We recommend you to bring some loose-fitting clothes as well, just in case you gain extra weight.

You will probably want to bring a small gift for your host family. Previous participants have suggested typical things from your home country, such as souvenirs, DVDs and CDs, t-shirts, etc. Don't be afraid of being creative, though. Also, don't forget to bring a small gift in case there is a maid in the house.

Your AFS Experience in Brazil

The Arrival

AFS staff and volunteers will be at the international airport to welcome you and forward you to your host community either by bus or plane, depending on the distance. The participants hosted up to 4-6 hours from São Paulo might be met by their host family at the airport upon arrival. AFS volunteers and probably your host family as well will be waiting for you at the bus station/airport in your host community to welcome you, if this is the case.

The biological clock

Everyone has a biological clock, which tells you when to eat, sleep, etc. Due to time zone change, yours will need some adjustment upon arrival. Little by little it will adjust itself to the time in Brazil. It may also interfere with other physical functions and headaches, irritation, insomnia, under or oversleeping is perfectly normal during the adjusting period. Don't panic!

Applying for your Brazilian ID card

Yes, you will have one! Participants must register with the Federal Police within **30 days, counting from the day you arrive in Brazil**. Please make sure you have approximately US\$150 in the local currency (Reais) to cover the expenses related to the issuance of the ID card, such as: fees, photos (you'll need 3), photocopies and phone calls when necessary, besides the transportation to the nearest Federal Police Station as there might not be one at your host community.

Brazilian immigration authorities can be very bureaucratic when dealing with your papers so, make sure you have the Visa Request Form (Pedido de Visto) filled with yours and your parent's names properly spelled, exactly as it's shown in your passport. It's quite handy to have a copy of your Birth Certificate certified by the Brazilian Embassy/Consulate where you've requested your visa as it may clear out any possible doubts and for school purpose as well. Your family and/or AFS volunteers will help you to obtain your ID card, but remember, it is your responsibility to provide the necessary documents and any fees for delay will be **YOUR** own responsibility.

You will need the following documents:

- 3 photos 3x4
- Visa Request Form
- Passport and copies of the written pages
- Around US\$150 in the local currency (Brazilian Reais)
- Federal Polices Forms (www.dpf.gov.br), fill in the forms and pay a fee at the bank. Code 140120 (124,23 BRL) and code 140082 (64,58 BRL).
- Brazilian Customs Form
- Copy of the birth certificate certified by the Brazilian Embassy/consulate where they have requested their visa. This document will be required by the Federal Police when participant's name in the visa application form does not match with the name in the passport.

School

AFS places great importance on active school participation. It should be the focal point of your year and you are expected to attend school daily and complete the assigned coursework. Here is some general information about school in Brazil.

Brazil has only one educational system, divided into 3 parts:

- Elementary Education: 9 years;
- Middle Education: 3 years;
- Higher Education: University.

You will probably be attending the 2nd or 3rd year of Middle School Education corresponding to High School.

The school year goes from February/March to December, with 2 to 3 weeks winter vacation in July. Most students attend school from Monday to Friday. Exceptions are made for those who are on the 3rd. year or during exam period. Students attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon.

There are few or no social clubs or events in Brazilian schools. Many schools do not even have school sports teams. This means that you will have to find your afternoon/morning activities depending upon which period you will attend classes outside school or organize them yourself. Maybe you can include a musical instrument or sports equipment when planning what to bring.

Many of your classmates here in Brazil will spend large parts of their outside school time doing homework. It is also common for students to take language classes after school at private language institutes. The same holds true for students who want to study music, arts, dance, etc.

The more involved you get in school, the easier you will find to become part of the peer group: if you have to do more or less the same homework they do, you will share their experiences and be one of them. If you take the same tests and exams, you will all share the same emotions and they will like and respect you for that. It is possible that few people at your school even know that you are coming. Since Brazilian schools are not really a social unit, such news do not get spread around easily. Be ready to take the initiative and introduce yourself to your classmates.

The Brazilian academic system is organized in a way that you will have the same classmates through the whole school year and the same schedule as well, which cannot be chosen and usually includes the following subjects: Portuguese, Brazilian Literature, Mathematics, Geography, History, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, one foreign language (English, French or Spanish), Physical Education and Civics. Very few schools will offer Arts, Photography, Computer Science, etc.

Do not get upset if your school achievement takes a while before it picks up. Learning the language and trying to follow what is going on is quite a task for the start. Nobody expects you to do brilliantly on tests or exams when you are still learning the language. You will be appreciated by your teacher and classmates, though, if you try to understand and show that you are interested.

School Text Books

AFS will provide you with the BOOKS that you will need at school. Those books belong to AFS, but if you wish to bring them back home with you, then you have to pay for them. As for general school supplies (notebooks, pens, book bags etc) they are your responsibility.

School Uniform

Unless the school you will attend requires a uniform, you will wear jeans, T shirts, sweaters and sneakers. **The school uniform is an expense paid by the participant and not by AFS.** Please, read the information regarding the uniform available in the Host School Information sheet.

3 REASONS FOR YOU TO TAKE SCHOOL SERIOUSLY

- #1** The AFS Program you're part of is a school based program, therefore your attendance and full participation are mandatory.
- #2** For you to receive a student visa the school has issued a Declaration to the Immigration Department stating that they have granted you with a scholarship and that you will be treated as a regular student there. That means that they have expectations regarding your school commitment.
- #3** You may need either grades or a certificate of attendance when you return to your country. If this is the case, you are responsible for requesting such papers at your host school before your return home. AFS will not take the responsibility for that after you leave. The same goes to school declaration in order to receive government education grants.

AFS Rules

NO Hitchhiking

Never ask or accept rides from strangers. Never hitchhike (pegar carona). This is a must for boys and girls. You must be conscious of the fact that a car can be a locked room on wheels. For being unsafe, hitchhiking is not allowed by AFS and the violation of this rule will result in the **early return** of the participant.

NO Driving

You are not allowed to drive cars, motorcycles, or any other motorized vehicles even if you have a driver's license from your country. The violation of this rule will result in the early return of the participant.

NO Involvement with Illegal Drugs

It is forbidden for all AFS participants to consume drugs except those prescribed for medical purposes. Explicit violation of this rule is cause for dismissal from the program and **immediate return** to the home country.

You should remember this whenever you find yourself in a situation where illegal substances are being used or there is an excessive use of alcohol.

The early return of the participant also applies to situations when s/he is involved with drugs. It is important to understand that involvement not only means actually using drugs, but also having drug paraphernalia in personal possession, frequenting places where drugs are used or knowingly associating with persons using these substances, etc.

For the reasons above, AFS recommends that you find out a little about the event (rock concert, party, etc) you are interested in going to. Usually your host sibling, parents, friends or teachers at school can give information about the event and the people expected to attend. It is also important that you respect your host parents advice regarding your participation in the event, even if others you know are going.

Other Rules

Other situations that may lead to your **early return** are:

- Inability to adjust to AFS values and expectations in host family, host community, and/or school;
- The emergence of conditions that according to professional recommendation (medical or psychological) would be best dealt with close to natural family such as eating disorders, pregnancy and others;
- Lack of academic commitment;
- Students own personal request for early return.

Program Release

AFS encourages you to return to your home country with the group. However, if you choose to stay you will need to request a Program Release (PR) 3 months prior to the scheduled return date. Once you request a PR your natural family will be asked to sign a form. By requesting a PR you: take responsibility to making your return arrangements (including paying any necessary fines); will have to extend your visa, if necessary; will lose AFS insurance after the PR date and give up the domestic trip to the point of international departure. In a few words, a PR means you are on your own!

Body Piercing and Tattoos

AFS BRA discourages participants from obtaining body piercings and tattoos while hosted in Brazil. It is against the dress code of many schools to wear pierced decoration on parts of the body. In some communities, individuals with such decoration may not be viewed in a positive light. Not only may this negative perception hinder adjustment in school or family life, but piercing can also lead to painful infection!

If you have already have a facial piercing, you might consider asking your host family before coming if this is permitted at your host school and/or how this might be received among teenagers at your host school.

If you don't have any piercing or tattoo but plans to have it done while in Brazil, please contact our office so we can ask your natural family a written authorization allowing you to do this procedure.

Travel Rules

AFS Intercultura Brazil takes all necessary precautions to keep you safe and sound during your stay. Part of reducing your risks is establishing rules in regards to travel. So, please, **NEVER MAKE TRAVEL PLANS BEFORE CHECKING THIS LIST** and consulting your local volunteer.

- **YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO MISS SCHOOL TO TRAVEL.**
- Trips with the host family: make sure your AFS local chapter has an address or a phone number to contact you in case of any emergency.
- Independent travel (non-AFS organized, non-school, non-family trips): we strongly discourage such trips and would like you to keep in mind the main focus during your AFS year should be your family/school/community. Requests will be carefully examined case by case. Such plans have to be informed to the National Office by chapter volunteers **at least 15 business days** in advance, so that a written permission from your natural parents is arranged between both, hosting and sending AFS offices. This written permission is a **Travel Waiver (TW)** and it is an inter-office procedure valid for a specific period duly assigned. No other kind of authorization will be accepted. **In no case you'll be allowed to miss school to travel independently.**
- Independent trips are only allowed after 3 months after your arrival in Brazil.
- If a student wants to visit another AFSSer, both hosting chapters will need to be involved in the planning.
- Natural family visits are discouraged as we believe they can disrupt the experience. If they occur, they must be authorized by your AFS local chapter and discussed among AFS offices. Trips with natural family are also discouraged, if they occur a Travel Waiver will need to be signed.

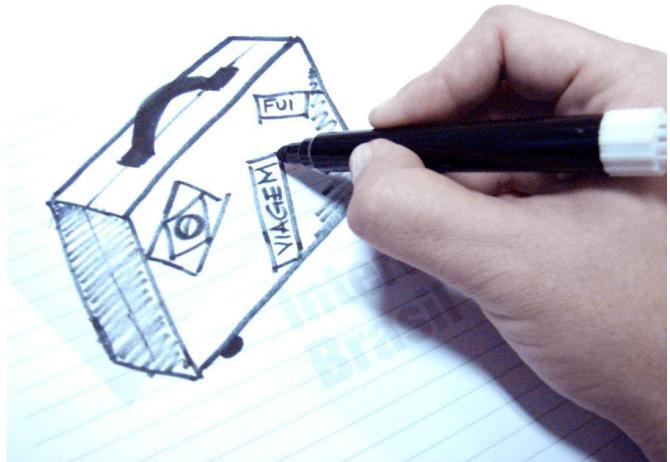
- Students are not allowed to independently participate in any trips or travel packages organized by a third party operator except for the Optional Trips (see optional trips).
- Students are not allowed to travel independently out of Brazil unless accompanied by host family, host school, natural family or in one of the optional trips. In this case, it is the students' responsibility to check about visa issues.
- Students are not allowed to overnight in a hotel or hostel unless accompanied by host family, host school, natural family or in one of the optional trips.

General Travel Rules

- Always avoid traveling during the night;
- Always have on your phone numbers to contact your host family and a local volunteer;
- Always carry your Brazilian ID or protocol and your Health Insurance card;
- Travel Waivers are not granted between **Christmas** and **New Year** nor during **Carnaval** due to increased risks during these holidays;
- The National Office reserves the right to suspend the granting of travel waivers during specific periods or to particular destinations if security needs so require.

IMPORTANT:

THE NON OBSERVANCE OF THE
ABOVE HOSTING RULES
MAY CAUSE THE IMMEDIATE
RETURN HOME OF THE
PARTICIPANT!



Optional Trips

AFS Intercultura Brasil offers a few optional trips organized by a partner travel agency called Belo Brasil Tours in which you might want to take part.

There are currently five tourist/cultural tours available and scheduled to take place during your stay. These tours are specially organized by a very experienced agency and chaperoned by AFS volunteers. This is why these are the only trips organized by agencies that you are allowed to take part during your exchange.

There are four short trips: to the Iguaçu Falls in December; to the Pantanal Region in November, to Rio de Janeiro in January, and to the Amazon in May. The 5th trip is a long one (around 26 days) scheduled to happen twice a year, during school vacation, so that it is available to participants of both cycles, SH in July and NH in January.

The fees for the optional trips include: bus transportation between cities and for sight-seeing, hotels/hostels, breakfast and one more meal (lunch or dinner). The medical insurance remains valid as long as original receipts are presented for reimbursement.

For more information, please check the brochure AFS Tour in Brazil from Belo Brasil Tours.

Observations:

*students who are experiencing serious adaptation problems or moved to a new host family a few days or weeks before the trip, may be denied the opportunity to participate.

* Practicing sports or any kind of activity that may imply in life (e.g. hang gliding, bungee jumping, flying in private planes) can only be allowed with a written authorization from your natural parents obtained through AFS offices (Activity/Sports Waiver).

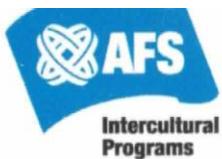
Medical Care

While on the program, AFS participants are medically insured. AFS insurance does not cover preexisting medical conditions, preventive medication or immunizations, dental care, eyeglasses, contact lenses, routine eye-exams, cosmetic or elective surgery.

Public hospitals in Brazil generally are not so good in quality if compared with the private ones. That is why we recommend that you look for private medical services whenever needed. In case of doubts, please, ask your host family or local chapter for assistance in locating a reliable doctor/hospital.

Participants are required to pay the doctor's bill and any other costs: blood tests, x-ray, medicine...etc, and submit bills to the AFS office for reimbursement. For this purpose, participants will need to submit the **AFS Medical Form**(see attached), to be filled out by the doctor, along with **all the bills and doctor's prescriptions** (both original docs). The AFS office will also reimburse the expenses related to mailing these docs via sedex (express post office service available in Brazil).

In case you are not with a member of the host family or volunteer and need to show proof of coverage, provide them with the following information:



24 Hour Medical Assistance Service

In the event of a medical emergency which may require treatment, hospitalization or emergency return, contact the local AFS office listed on the back of this card. If not available, contact GMMI at these numbers.



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1300 Concord Terrace, Suite 300, Sunrise FL 33323

Valid for approved participants while on an AFS program.



RELATÓRIO PARA REEMBOLSO MÉDICO

Este relatório deve ser levado à consulta médica e nos campos pertinentes, preenchido pelo médico que assistir o estudante. Os **recibos** devem ser emitidos em **nome do próprio estudante** e não da família hospedeira e **necessariamente anexados a este relatório**.

Uso do AFS:	_____	_____	_____
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- A SER PREENCHIDO PELO MÉDICO RESPONSÁVEL EM LETRA DE FORMA:

1. NOME DO ESTUDANTE: _____

2. SINTOMAS DA DOENÇA: _____

3. DIAGNÓSTICO DA DOENÇA: _____

4. RESUMO DO TRATAMENTO DISPENSADO: _____

5. SITUAÇÃO ATUAL DO PACIENTE: _____

6. DATA(S) DO TRATAMENTO MÉDICO: INÍCIO: _____ FIM: _____

7. NOME DO MÉDICO: _____

8. CLÍNICA/HOSPITAL: _____

9. ENDEREÇO E TELEFONE: _____

10. DATA E ASSINATURA: _____

11. ATENÇÃO: OS DADOS ABAIXO SÃO IMPRESCINDÍVEIS PARA O REEMBOLSO:

NOME DO CORRENTISTA: _____

BANCO: _____ AGÊNCIA: _____

CONTA CORRENTE: _____ CPF: _____

Useful facts about Brazil

This section offers some tips to help you adjust to the Brazilian culture, especially on how to get along well with your new family. What we are presenting here are generalizations about the Brazilian culture.

Since Brazil is so diverse and also because cultural habits might vary due to many reasons, they might not apply exactly to what you will experience in your local hosting community. However, these generalizations offer interesting cultural insights about some general aspects of the Brazilian culture. Bear in mind that the best way to learn and integrate to a new culture is to observe and ask questions!



You will run into a number of people here in Brazil who may know nothing or very little about your country. Some may have very strong views on your country and its politics, others may have very naïve conceptions about how you live at home. You may even run into prejudices due to lack of knowledge within your host family or peer-group. It is most important that you don't take things personally! They are not directed at you, but they reflect a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of facts. Feel free to tell people how things really are. This is part of the exchange.

Host Family

First of all, it is important to remember that your host family is participating in this exchange because they want to gain as much from the experience as you do. They are opening up their home and hearts to you in the spirit of an intercultural exchange, without any monetary compensation. Your new family members will want to learn as much about you and your background as you should about them.

In many ways your host family will be like all other families. There will be times of joy, times of conflict, and times of simply being together. In one thing your host family is unique: in their generosity. They have opened their home to you so that you can share the life of each family member and their life together. This generosity surpasses any monetary value because no host family is paid to host.

At Home

A good way to get into the ‘hang’ of how things are done around the house is to look and learn, but also, to **participate!** The more you participate in the family activities, the easier it will be for you all to get to know each other better. The first step you will have to take is to become a member of your family. The family is a very close unit in this country. If they are busy, ask if you can help. For politeness, they may refuse your help in the beginning. Under these circumstances, the key action is to insist: “**Please, let me help!**” (“Por favor, deixe-me ajudar!”) Even if your family has a maid - which is fairly common in Brazil - be ready to help in the housework.

Maids

You may not be used to having a maid at home. In Brazil they are usually treated like a member of the family, but no one in the house forgets they are, in fact, servants. Remember that an extra person in the house means extra work for them. So always express your appreciation for the service they deliver to you.

Parents

Parental decisions are respected and followed, and the parents have the last word in disciplinary and other family matters. They are concerned about the responsibility of having a new child at home and they expect you to learn their habits and live as another family member. Authority patterns may differ from what you’re used to back home. No problem! You’re here for the

challenge of learning and living according to Brazilian patterns. They do not know you yet and as you show how capable you are of taking responsibility it may be easier to accommodate your needs. Do not question their authority from the start! You will probably hurt them and might strain the relationship. Developing a relationship takes time ... and patience. You may not be used to asking permission to go out with friends or to have a curfew, but in most Brazilian families this will be true.

Sometimes house rules may get on your nerves. In the face of opposition, try to stay calm and discuss the problem, in the true spirit of an intercultural exchange. If it seems difficult to do that, you can always go for a long walk; exercise is a good release and it gives you time to think things over you will stay in shape, too!

Youth

In general, during the first couple of months you will be part of a small group of your host brother/sister's friends. Do not expect to be on the go all the time. You will find that night life **on weekends** is an important part of Brazilian social life, especially when it comes to dancing, drinking in a "café" or eating out, which usually begins after nine in the evening or even later.

Do not expect your host sister or brother to become your best friend, but always try to act in a friendly way with him/her. You will notice that, as a rule, children are financially dependent on their parents until they enter University or even until they finish it.

Boys are usually allowed more freedom than girls; Brazilian girls have less freedom than girls from most European and North American countries. Do not expect to do things here as you are used to at home. Accommodating to that new reality will be part of an intercultural experience.

In general, Brazilian boys and girls are raised under some traditional gender distinctions. Household tasks have traditionally been "women's jobs" (washing, ironing, everyday cooking and the dishes, as well as general house cleaning, dusting, floor scrubbing, sewing, mending, etc.). Men are usually designated repair tasks (such as fixing the leaking faucets, checking and repairing electrical equipment, taking care of the "outside jobs" such as paying bills, etc.).

Despite these gender differentiations, people are used to share the costs of outing and girls are expected to pay their own share.

Religion

Brazilian population is used to and believes in a great variety of religions. Brazilian families usually have at least a couple catholic members. Christian religions are the most important and popular. Many families attend weekly religious services and the youth religious movement is getting stronger.

Food, Eating and Drinking Habits:

Most Brazilians are used to two large meals: lunch and dinner. Breakfast is quick and light. Some families are also used to having a snack in the afternoon. For Brazilians, eating well means eating a lot!

Brazilians enjoy eating and are also very proud of their food. You are expected to **gladly** taste everything that is offered to you. Home cooking is generally very good, often very rich, too. Don't worry too much about gaining weight, it can be lost again!

Try to always be there at meals time, as in most families it is an important family gathering occasion; if you think you cannot make it, don't forget to arrange so in advance or call.

Ask before you take food from the refrigerator, it might be planned for something. Notice that offering and sharing any food you are having out of meal time, may be considered as a sign of courtesy.

There are no cultural or religious bans on drinking alcohol as a general rule. Young people are expected to know their limits for drinking and going out just for the sake of getting drunk isn't popular.

Remember that according to our culture being drunk is no sign of maturity and certainly not accepted by the families. **We trust you to treat the availability of alcohol in our country responsibly**, too, as the legal drinking age for any kind of liquor - 18 - is not much enforced. Check out how your family handles it and go along.

The same goes for smoking. Remember that AFS Brazil does not accept participants that smoke. **If you've stated in your application form that you were willing to abstain during the AFS year, keep it in mind as it is certainly what is expected from you.** Non compliance to this rule may lead to your Early Return.

Greetings and non-verbal communication

People generally talk and laugh loudly, and may, sometimes, give the impression of fighting. Body language is widely spread as well as touching the interlocutor arm, shoulder, hands... while talking. Brazilians are very expressive, it is very common to kiss (on the cheeks) when meeting or saying good bye. This habit is also common between parents, children, other family members and friends. Men generally shake hands.

"Magical" words:

Say 'por favor' (please) and 'obrigado' (thank you) at all times - those words - never go out of style. Saying 'bom dia' (good morning), 'boa noite' (good night) and 'tchau' (good bye) is also a courteous thing to do in Brazil. Brazilians usually say 'Saúde!' (Bless you) when others sneeze.

Phones:

Don't stay on the phone for too long. Bear in mind that telephone services in Brazil are very expensive. Every call is charged! If you have to make long-distance or international calls from your host family phone, keep in mind you're expected to pay for those calls when monthly bill arrives. There are probably times when phone calls are cheaper. Remember to ask for it in due time. Ask your host family to help you find out when calls are more affordable. To call your parents in your home country, we suggest you to make collect calls.

Hygiene habits

Brazilians enjoy bathing daily. Do not stay in the bathroom too long and be conscious of the needs of the rest of your family. Not taking at least one shower a day is considered something very negative in our culture.

Underwear

It is a habit that in most of the families you wash your own underwear, even if there is a maid. Do so on the first days until you find out how it works in your family.

Toilet

If there is a waste basket beside the basin, dispose in it toilet paper, pads or tampons. Having a clogged toilet may be an embarrassing experience.

Privacy

Our sense of privacy is certainly very different from other cultures. You may wish to stay alone locked in your room reading, writing letters or just listening to music.

However, this attitude may lead your host family to understand that you have a problem or that you don't appreciate their company. So, please, don't stay locked in your room when the rest of the family is together somewhere else in the house. For instance, if your family gathers to watch TV after dinner, stay with them, even if you do not understand it at all. Try to join your family in every possible occasion.

Language

Host families are instructed to help participants whenever needed. Although many host family members can speak English, we suggest you to try to speak Portuguese as much as possible.

It is likely that you will meet people who speak some of your native language and that will try to practice it with you. It is not that they are taking advantage of you. In fact it is really an exchange. However, if you feel that you are not having enough chance to speak Portuguese, we suggest you to make an agreement with them to set up time for language practice.

Learning the language and trying to follow what is going on is quite a task for the start, but your efforts to understand and your interest will be highly appreciated by all the people involved.

Internet, Social networking and etc.

Just remember, you did not come to Brazil to spend your days at the computer, we recommend that limit your internet use to no more than two hours a day!

Safety Tips

During your experience, you will surely find new and different situations along the way and you may not be aware of what is proper and acceptable especially regarding your own safety in our country.

The purpose of this “Safety Tips” is to make recommendations and give you guidelines for your physical welfare and security.

Due to the continental size of the country and consequent diversity of towns and population, the concept of security varies a lot from place to place in Brazil. For instance, you can be placed in a metropolis or in medium size cities where families live in buildings with security personnel or in more rural areas where people even may not be used to lock doors.

As you see, it would be impossible to tell you how to behave in every particular situation you may face. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to discuss the local security aspects and your questions concerning personal safety with your host family and AFS volunteers upon arrival. In addition, you should follow the recommendations included in this guide in order to assure your safe stay in Brazil.

TWO BASIC RULES

- 1) One way for you to be prepared for any problems, is to carry a photocopy of your passport in your purse or wallet and your Brazilian Id Card at all times. Please see detailed information on how to get this ID in the guide Bem Vindo ao Brasil. (intensive program students will not receive the ID). Another important paper to carry is the AFS Medical Card which you will receive after your arrival in Brazil. You should also carry your host family's home and work telephone numbers, and the numbers for your local AFS volunteers and the National Office. In addition, memorize your host family's home and work telephone numbers.
- 2) Before agreeing to go out with your friends, you should get permission from your host parents. Always make it a rule to tell them your plans: where you are going, who with, what you are going to do and when you are returning. Your host family knows the most

about their community and is best prepared to give you advice about places it would be better for you to avoid and how best to get around. You should take their advice seriously and follow their recommendations.

And a third one: Ask!

In general, your host family is not likely to know what you are worried about, and needs to be informed about this by you. For example, host families will usually explain about making telephone calls, but may not realize that you may have concerns about how to answer the telephone, especially if you are not comfortable in using the host country language and are not yet familiar with people who may be calling. AFS encourages you to ask your host parents about all issues related to your safety.

Although the way your host family wishes you to act may vary from family to family, it is important that you know the general tips from AFS in Brazil regarding the following specific issues or situations.

IN OR AROUND THE HOME

Alone at home

When you are alone at home, always make sure the door is locked and chained (if available).

Never open the door to strangers, unless your family informs you that someone (relative or friend) is coming.

If someone is at the door, always be sure to check who is there by looking through the peephole (olho mágico) or talking on the intercom before opening the door. If you are unable to understand what that person is saying or you are not sure who it is, ask them to come back later (por favor, volte mais tarde).

Ask your host family what to do when a stranger comes to your home when you are alone: for example, whether or not you should answer the phone or intercom (porteiros eletrônicos) or receive deliveries. If yes, ask them how.

It is important to know who you should contact in case there is a problem and you are alone at home.

Never say you are alone at home if you do not know who you are talking to. Sometimes, if a stranger calls it may be necessary for you to say you are not alone. Of course, if a close neighbor or someone you know well comes to your home when you are by yourself, after checking who they are, you may decide to open the door, if you think it is safe.

House keys

If your host family gives you the house key (chave de casa), you should be careful not to lose it. Ask your host family whether you need to lock the doors and windows when you go out or at night, and when and how to lock them; be sure to follow their instructions correctly.

Ask your host family what you should do in case you lose the house key and you find the house locked.

Ask them where you should go and who to phone to.

Personal Information

Ask your family to whom you can safely give personal information. Ask them if you are allowed to give the home phone number to your friends and if they have rules about this issue. Never give your telephone number or address to strangers who speak to you on the streets or on the phone (suspicious calls should be kept as short as possible). Even if a person seems friendly and trustworthy, you have no idea what kind of intention this person has.

This is also a rule for internet use. Be extremely careful with the information about yourself and your host family (specially home phone numbers, cell phone numbers and home address) you disclose on the web.

Weapons

It is possible that your host parents keep a gun at home for personal safety reasons. Do not touch it and never play with it even if you are sure it is not loaded. Many serious accidents happen due to this reason.

Although weapons are relatively easily available for private citizens, its possession is only legal for people aged 21 years old or older. It is

important to know that the unauthorized possession of weapons is considered a legal crime in Brazil.

OUTSIDE HOME

Arriving at home unexpectedly

In case you are out of the house and decide to come back at a different time than what your host parents were told, make sure you call them first so that they can expect your arrival and don't get worried. In some communities where people are more concerned about safety, arriving late at home unexpectedly may lead your hosts to take you by a stranger trying to get into their house or apartment.

Dangerous Areas

Ask your host family how safe is your neighborhood, if it is safe to carry your valuables with you (jewelry, money, etc) and if you can be outside the house late at night.

At the earliest opportunity, have your host family and local AFS volunteers teach you where the dangerous areas in your city or region are located and how local people avoid or deal with dangerous situations. It is important for you to know thoroughly the layout and names of places in your area, as well as the times you should particularly avoid such areas.

In many Brazilian state capitals and smaller cities, there are some very poor neighborhoods - generally slums - which were forgotten by the government for many years and nowadays are ruled by drug dealers.

Although the majority of its residents are workers and friendly citizens, you should not enter these areas and must be alert if you are in the surroundings! In some of these dangerous districts - especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo - there is a real risk of gunfire and stray bullets.

If You Get Lost...

...and have to ask for directions, ask a person in uniform such as a policeman.

Buy a telephone card ("cartão telefônico") and always have some cash with you. This is in case of an emergency situation or to call your family if you are lost. You should also keep with you the phone number of your AFS local contact that can help you in such situations.

If You Are Not Used To Crowded Urban Centers...

...there are important advices that you should consider! Try to carry your back- pack in the front.

Pay attention at your wallet, purse and other valuable things while walking in crowded streets, buses or subways.

Avoid empty streets since many crimes happen in quiet places. Never carry a lot of money with you.

You should have only what you need for the day. Make sure that you put your money, purse or valuables in your bag, so they are not showing. Be careful about people who may approach you from behind or suddenly talk to you on the street. Also, do not pay attention to any sales talk while walking on the streets.

Beware of street children. While many of them are nice and inoffensive, others are used to steal and have developed smart ways to do it. Don't underestimate them. They usually act as a group and have the protection of older people.

Public Transport

In most Brazilian cities, the main public transportation consist of medium size buses and in general terms they are considered safe to be used during daylight hours. In any public transportation system, you should be careful especially at rush hours, because it is easy for pickpockets to steal.

Regular taxi services are usually not reliable for tourists and foreigners in bus stations and airports of many big cities.

Whenever you are in these places, take special cabs which require prepaid fares. They are more expensive but also much safer.

INTERNET USAGE and CONCERNs

The information you post online or send electronically can easily become public. When you provide personal contact data "virtually", you are assuming the risk of being found by someone dangerous in the "real world."

The same happens when you post or send intimate information and images that may attract bad intentioned people, expose you to cyber bullies and others.

Keep in mind that some material that you naively publish at the web can also damage your reputation and jeopardize your academic and professional future.

Be careful about the frequency and the purpose why you access the web. Addiction to Internet has been identified as a major factor to school failure. Besides, it makes you spend much time in the "cyberspace", missing opportunities for a healthy engagement in a host community where many interesting things are waiting to be discovered. There, in the "real world" is where your host family, friends and schoolmates are living. The exchange program is meant to be a time for creating ties and developing personal relationships, don't let the Internet take this unique experience from you

"DENGUE"

It is a disease carried by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito with symptoms including fever, headache, weakness, rash, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and muscle pain. It has four known serotypes and the disease can be benign or serious, depending on the form it presents itself. An early diagnosis is extremely helpful in order to avoid complications. There is no vaccination available yet, but trials are under way.

In the Americas, dengue fever has been recorded for over 200 years. Some Brazilian states usually face a rise of dengue cases during the summer due to higher rainfall and warmer weather typical of this period of the year.

Primary prevention of dengue mainly resides in eliminating or reducing the mosquito vector for dengue. Initiatives to eradicate pools of standing water (such as in flowerpots) have proven useful in controlling mosquito borne diseases. Covering of the exposed skin and the use of repellent are also commonly recommended as preventive measures.

If dengue is suspected, the patient should not take medicines that have acetylsalicylic acid as one of its components, like aspirin. "Paracetamol" preparations should be taken instead. However, if one presents with one or more dengue symptoms he/she should look for immediate medical assistance.

THE POLICE

In Brazil, depending on the region and community, the police may not be very reliable. Also, in order to affirm their authority in the dangerous areas, policemen on duty in these places tend to be rude and sometimes do not respect basic rights. Ask your family how reliable is the police in your host community and which precautionary advice you should take in account whenever dealing with them.

It is important that if you find yourself being questioned by the police or other civil authority officer, you show respect and cooperation with them, even though you may be innocent of any crime and think you are being treated unfairly. In such a situation, it is unlikely that you will understand what is being said by the authority figure. In general, the best advice would be to say that you do not understand what is happening and identify yourself as an exchange participant. It is advisable for participants to always carry their Brazilian Identification Card. This is important not only in the event of being questioned by authorities, but also in the unfortunate event of a personal accident or if you become the victim of a crime and may not be able to effectively communicate.

In most Brazilian cities, there are no curfews set by municipal authorities. Young people are allowed to be in the streets late at night. For this

reason, we strongly recommend you to ask your host family about the time they want you to be back home. Also, it is possible that they wish you to be accompanied with someone else if you are outside the house until late at night. Please follow your host family rules about this issue.

REGISTRATION WITH YOUR EMBASSY OR CONSULATE

All embassies recommend that any citizen of their country who will reside in Brazil for more than 3 months register with the embassy or the nearest consular office. Registration confirms your identity as a citizen of your home country and may make it easier to provide you with assistance in emergency situations. They usually require your original passport or a photocopy of the description pages and a photograph. Be prepared as you probably have expenses. It is possible that some of them charge a fee or require your presence for your registration.

At your earliest convenience after your arrival, ask your host family what's the phone number of the Embassy or nearest Consulate of your country in Brazil (you can also check this information in the following website: (www.consulados.com.br) and contact them in order to get precise instructions about registration.

CONCLUSION

The best general advice AFS can recommend regarding issues of personal safety are:

- Get to know the host culture well through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, peers, teachers, the AFS local contacts.
- Take seriously any concerns that your host family and host institution have expressed and follow their advice.
- Do not ignore your own "instinct" in any given situation or feel you have to compromise your own personal behavioral values and beliefs. These are valuable resources in making decisions about what to do.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of a personal emergency, please call the following phone numbers in the order:

1. Host family
2. Local AFS volunteer
3. AFS National Office (21) 3724-4464 during business hours or
(21) 99615 6499 - after business hours

Please ask your host family for the following phone numbers and keep them in your personal phone book: neighborhood police station (delegacia do bairro), fire department and a reliable local hospital or family doctor.

In the event of a natural disaster, do whatever is indicated by your host family or AFS local volunteer. AFS Brazil's national office will contact you at your host family's house or school in order to be sure that you are safe and will send a report to your sending country's national office.

**KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND AND ENJOY YOUR STAY
IN BRAZIL!**

NAMES TO REMEMBER

Our AFS Chapter: _____

Chapter President: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Local Counsellor: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Others: _____

Our AFS Region: _____

School: _____

Contact Teacher: _____

Telephone: _____