

Support Person

Are you a good listener and communicator? Do you enjoy problem solving? Are you passionate about learning about other cultures? Do you have any experience counselling or working with international students?

AFS Support volunteers are the primary source of contact for exchange students who are hosted in New Zealand and for their NZ host families. This important role would suit somebody who enjoys building relationships, has good communication skills, can act objectively and can comfortably relate to people of all ages. It also requires a person who has the ability to be there when things don't go so well for those they support. A knack for problem solving, good conflict resolution skills, as well as a genuine commitment to the role are very important attributes for a Support volunteer.

Role Description:

As an AFS support volunteer you will be paired with a student who you will support for the duration of their stay in New Zealand. Your main focus will be helping the student adapt to life in New Zealand, provide guidance so that they can stay safe and healthy, help them to understand cultural differences, and value the learning experience they are having. You will also be a listening ear and advisor to the host family, as they experience the joy and the challenge that hosting an exchange student brings.

As part of your role you will be helping both the participant and their host family define their expectations for their AFS experience as well as helping them work together through normal adjustment experiences.

What can we offer you?

Becoming a support volunteer will enable you to put your communication skills into action, as well as allowing you to build on your inter-cultural, conflict resolution and facilitation skills. You will be part of a world-wide organization that is leader in intercultural education and have the opportunity to gain internationally recognized training.

Volunteering is great on your CV - recruiters and employers look favourably on a CV with volunteering experience. We provide intercultural learning and volunteer opportunities for students, young adults, teachers and families through international exchanges and we've been doing it since 1947! AFS relies on its dedicated volunteers to continue the long-term success of the organization.

As an AFS volunteer you'll contribute to our mission by 'thinking globally and acting locally', helping others learn more about the world in a very real and personal way, as you use and sharpen your skills and gain new ones as well.

Here's what one of our support people had to say about the experience:

"Being a support person makes me feel like I make a real difference in the experience that our exchange students have. I've shared the joy of school, sports and personal accomplishments, I've laughed with the students about the silly things we do in New Zealand that I'd never found strange before they opened my eyes to our own oddities."

Basic Functions:

Provide support to an allocated AFS host students and their host families by:

- Providing an objective ear to both participants and families by maintaining a monthly contact with both parties.
- Log confidential progress reports, based on the monthly meetings, on host students and host families, by the 8th of each month, in the AFS computer system (GL).
- Liaise with the student's host school at least once a term and work as the school's contact person while the student is attending the school.
- Immediately notify AFS National Office when serious, or potentially serious, support or health issues arise, to ensure appropriate risk management procedures and follow-up.
- Processing requests for information, travel permissions, medical forms, etc. promptly (i.e. within a week).
- Participate in running the Gateway and/or End of Stay Orientation Sessions for the host students.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times

Training:

Approximately 3 hours of required online training for volunteers new to the role. Attend a National Office run one day workshop training for the support role at least once every two years

All costs for support people are covered by AFS for these orientations.

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. You will join a team comprised of fun and passionate people dedicated to promoting life-long learning for all.