



## Information Letter for Parents

**Important:** Please carefully read this document BEFORE giving your child their information letter.

### Dear Parents,

Thank you very much for considering Adolesco.

You have contacted us because you are interested in sending your child abroad for a stay of three weeks to three months and hosting their exchange partner in turn. Here, we'll attempt to describe the qualities that make Adolesco's exchange program special and unique. You should know that this association has clear set of expectations: not only for the children and teenagers participating in an exchange, but also for the parents involved, and, of course, for ourselves. For the adventure to be a success, we all need to work together.

As a two-way exchange, in which both children travel, all parties must be invested in the experience. That goes well beyond the child concerned. Considering a real **exchange** for your child means preparing to host, which takes effort on your part. If you do not feel ready to host a foreign child in conditions that you would appreciate for your own child, Adolesco is not the organization for you.

### Adolesco's goals

Above all, we are looking for families interested in human relationships.

You are perhaps beginning to understand our way of looking at things. It's not just a linguistic exchange: we propose something rather different. It is our aim to create friendships between different countries and cultures, a friendship between two children and their families. To us this is the most important part, since after the friendship has begun, the linguistic benefits will come quite naturally.

Your child will hear the foreign language around the clock for the duration of his stay, but the friendship that has developed during this period (and during the hosting period) will be motivation for continued language learning back at school.

How can we be so sure?

One of the co-founders of Adolesco created the concept of long-term language immersion exchanges (6 months for each child) for young children in 1978 when he established "En Famille International." Other, similar organizations, like Allef and En Immersion, soon followed.

The primary intent of these organizations is the authentic language learning. But the experience of thousands of exchanges conducted since 1978 shows that additional acquisitions also include open-mindedness, listening, maturity, adaptability, tolerance, patience, and the friendships that emerge from this unforgettable time, for the children as well as the two families. This acknowledgment of human flourishing guides us in our work, without neglecting the linguistic dimension. After 7 weeks of foreign language immersion, 80% of children have integrated the basics of another language, even without having prior study in that language. Right from the

beginning, after the first long-term exchange, we saw that the linguistic results were remarkable but that the human side of the adventure was even more astonishing!

We therefore created Adolesco for children who do not want to go away for six months, but who do, nonetheless, wish to discover a new country, a new culture, a new way of life, a new language, another family, and have a willingness to form a friendship with someone their own age.

We ask the parents to be deeply involved in the exchange, in order that you can also create a friendship with a foreign family and discover the richness of difference.

This relationship will begin once you have accepted the family we have recommended for you. You will need to work with the other family to decide which child travels first and which travels second. After that, the dates and lengths of each child's stay need to be defined.

Although a friendship for life and a long-term relationship with a foreign family cannot be guaranteed, we can offer the best conditions to promote that goal. We're here to help.

### **Adolesco: the choice of a name**

Adolesco means "I am growing /I grow" in Latin. It was a conscious choice on our part not to choose a name that was French, Spanish, German, or English.

The name reflects our desire to help children and young people grow together around a human vision with shared educational values. In this way, we hope to contribute to the growth of citizens who are more open to the world and all its differences.

### **Destination and Length of Stay**

French, Spanish and German parents, overall, are very keen for their children to do exchanges in English-speaking countries as they feel it is essential in the world of work today.

In the same way, English-speaking parents often want their children to learn Spanish over French or German. Try to be as open as possible in your choice of country. French, Spanish, and German are all helpful languages to know. The language your child learns overseas doesn't necessarily have to be the one that he or she is studying in school. It is also possible to test out of language classes for credit by taking placement tests. The SAT subject test, for example, offers tests in Spanish, French, and German.

As we have already said, we see the human aspect of our exchanges, the building of a lifelong friendship between people from different countries and cultures, as being at least as important as the linguistic side of an exchange and perhaps in some ways even more important. At the same time, if you wish to have a real understanding of another culture you need to speak the language, as language is an integral part of culture.

Over the years, we have often had feedback from former exchange children who are now adults who say although they do not actually use their French, Spanish, or German in their professional life, their experience was the thing that made the difference. It made them more willing to take other opportunities to travel during their studies, and they are noticeably more open-minded and able to face new situations than many who have never left home.

If you remain open to all countries, your child will be much more likely to go abroad. So, do not worry too much if in the end your child is in a beautiful friendship in a Spanish-speaking, German-speaking, or French-speaking country. He will have other opportunities in the future to learn an additional language (maybe even a 2<sup>nd</sup> Adolesco exchange!).

**Our advice:**

Give us the best chance to choose the family that fits your child, and make the choice of language a secondary concern. "Choosing all countries" will mean: Germany, France, and Spain.

**Length of stay**

How long your child stays in another country is for you to decide with your child within your family, but we do not recommend a stay of less than three weeks because it's not enough time to realize a linguistic benefit. Often the first couple of weeks are the most difficult for the child as she adjusts and begins to understand the language.

Remember, too, that the length of stay of each child will likely be different. If your child only wishes to travel for one month, but the European child wishes to travel for two months, we ask that you accept this potential difference. **Given various legal requirements, two teenagers must have completed their travel before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays.**

We also need to clarify, even though it may seem obvious, that you do not host while your child is gone. You host either before or after your child travels; that is, the two children that are matched are together in both countries, first in one home and then in the other.

**The Cost of an Adolesco Exchange**

|   | <b>Application Fee</b> | <b>Exchange Fee</b> |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| First Exchange<br><i>(New Families, First Exchange)</i>   | \$100 USD/\$130 CAD    | \$1800/\$1770 CAD   |
| Same <b>North American</b> Family, New <b>European</b> Family<br><i>Same Child (2<sup>nd</sup> exchange) or Sibling</i> | \$100 USD/\$130 CAD    | \$1620/\$1590 CAD   |
| Same <b>North American AND European</b> Families<br><i>(Siblings)</i>   | waived                 | \$400/\$475 CAD     |

**Application fee**

Once you have decided to participate and are looking for a match, the application fee for submitting the **Full Application** is **\$100** (\$130 CAD). This fee is **non-refundable**, regardless of the outcome of the application and is due with the full application form.

**Exchange fee**

Once a match has been offered and accepted, the fee paid to Adolesco is **\$1800** (\$1770 CAD).

The exchange fee is paid in two installments:

- **\$600** (\$770 CAD) deposit, payable when the match is accepted, and
- **\$1200** (\$1000 CAD) balance, due two weeks before your child travels.

If an exchange is canceled before **either** child travels, the exchange deposit is refunded.

Please note: No money passes between the two families involved in an exchange without special permission

from Adolesco. Each child is the responsibility of the new family for the duration of their visit as if they were another member of the family.

In those rare cases where the **same** two families wish to do an exchange with two (other) siblings (for example, two younger sisters whose older brothers exchanged with each other), the exchange fee is \$400 (\$475 CAD) and the application fee is waived. Adolesco can offer support and guidance, even to experienced families.

## Travel and Insurance

Travel arrangements are made for each family for their own child. Consider the best way for your child to travel: alone, or accompanied by one or more parents. Depending on your child's age and the airline, he or she may be able to fly as an 'unaccompanied minor' for an additional fee.

It's best if the traveling child can arrive on a weekend or at a time when the host parents do not have to work the next day. **Please be sure the host family agrees to travel dates and times before purchasing ANY tickets.**

If you decide to travel with your child to Europe, we ask that you (the parents) not stay with the host family for more than two or three days. We know from experience that the transition period when there are two sets of parents is difficult for the children. They want to get it over with and to get on with their adventure. Also, sad parents who are worried and anxious about leaving their child can create a heavy atmosphere which does not make for a good start. Finally, the host family is looking forward to get settled with the new child. The same rules will apply when you welcome.

Adolesco requires that your child carry liability, repatriation, and medical insurance while abroad. We explain this further in the departure and arrival pack, but traveler's medical insurance policies often include repatriation and can usually be purchased online for less than \$100; your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy likely includes personal liability coverage that extends to your child.

## Let's talk about possible problems

As in all exchange and study abroad organizations dealing with families and children, the results will vary ranging from total success, a sense of satisfaction for challenges met, to returning home before the planned date, which all too often parents see as a "failure."

The complexity of human relationships commits us to be cautious in this area, as there is often much learning gained from experiences, even challenging ones. No guarantee of systematic success is therefore proposed; however, we put the best chances on our side for success.

As a rule, problems will be attributed to either Adolesco, the parents, or the children. Let's agree at the outset to leave some small part to fate or bad luck.

## Problems arising from choices made by Adolesco

It is Adolesco's job to prepare both children and parents through the documents we offer, the information meeting we host, and the home visits and interviews conducted by the representatives and volunteers. You are given an application form to fill out as truthfully as possible. Using the application form as a base, we meet and interview the families, after which we propose the matches.

As a non-profit, our primary goal is the quality of an exchange rather than an exchange for the sake of profit. More than three decades of experience have helped us refine our selection and matching process, but we have learned modesty in our ability to perfectly manage the human element. Despite our best efforts and all information collected, Adolesco may err in matching two applying families.

## Parent related problems

If you are reading these pages, it is likely that you are personally convinced of the benefits of such an experience. However, this belief must be shared with the child. In some cases, parents who come to us show a motivation disproportionate to that of the child who, to satisfy their parents, has agreed to apply.

All of us in the Adolesco team are involved in education, but we are also parents. We have brought up and educated our own children. If you know your child well and know that it will be difficult for them to adapt abroad, then please do not push them to go. Also, if you know your child and you know they will not fit easily abroad, do not push them to leave. Adolesco is not a form of therapy for children with difficulties.

If your child goes abroad, it is essential that you trust the host family. During your child's stay abroad your parental authority will be temporarily replaced by that of the host family. Some parents have difficulty accepting this change. You must also make sure that your child understands that they must abide by the new family's rules.

We ask you to think very carefully when you prepare the foreign child's arrival and stay in your home. Of course, there must be love, but there must also be the wish to help the child grow, along with the wish to enrich your own family. Adolesco is for parents who love to be with children and teenagers, and for parents who take an interest in the education and instruction of both their own children and children in general.

If this is not your case, if this doesn't sound like a good fit for your family, another exchange organization may be a better option for you and/or your child.

## Child-related problems

The child or young person who goes needs to be prepared. The departure should not be rushed or undertaken lightly. Each child has his or her own character and it is sometimes so difficult to adapt to an extended stay in an unusual situation that it is necessary to return home early. Such cases are rare but they do exist. Hence the importance of good preparation.

In Adolesco terms, success is not just good linguistic results. It is rather host parents who say "What a great kid!" or even "We really like him, he can come back any time, he's really one of the family now."

Your child's behavior (and his or her siblings when it is your turn to host) will be instrumental in the success of the exchange. If a child demonstrates good behavior and a willingness to engage and try new things, he will be confident and flourish.

As you can understand, problems arise from different sources, but we work together by phone and email to solve them. **We** have experience in linguistic exchanges, and **you** have the experience of your child and your family. If Adolesco and both families involved work together, many problems can be solved.

We have met hundreds of families in countries where lifestyles are very different and yet success can be beautiful, perhaps because of these differences, but also because the two families could accept and even appreciate these differences.

We will talk more about anticipating and dealing with difficulties at our informational meeting for applying families. It helps to meet other families interested in future exchanges, families who have already experienced exchanges, and Adolesco representatives.

## Why (and How) to Choose an Organization

In response to the question, “Why go through an organization?” we simply reply that, during an exchange, a very positive situation between two families can sometimes degenerate quickly and become a very difficult situation. Being able to appeal to a mediator from the association is a precious help when dealing with complicated, tense situations or ones that might rapidly become so.

Without this mediator, you must defend your ideas directly with the host family, which can gradually increase the tension despite your desire to do it well. This interaction is especially difficult if the parents do not share a common language.

In addition, Adolesco’s application process allows for the establishment of a comprehensive and consistent record that helps you know the family to whom you are entrusting your child.

## In Conclusion

We sincerely look forward to sharing this adventure with your family.

Please read through the information package with your child and discuss it together without rushing.

If you would like to go forward with the application process, please complete the Pre-Application. It is available online at [www.Adolesco.org](http://www.Adolesco.org). Upon receipt of your Pre-Application, we will send the Full Application. Once the Full Application is complete, your family will be asked to attend the New Family meeting, and to host your local representative for a home visit.

Questions, suggestions, or comments? Please contact the core team at [info@adolesco.org](mailto:info@adolesco.org), or your local Adolesco representative.

Sincerely,

The Adolesco Team

## The Adolesco Team

Our executive team is Jacques Pinault and Florence and Xavier Racinais.

**Jacques** and his late wife, Katherine, founded “En Famille International” in 1978, an association that organized long-term (six months’ travel for each child) language-immersion exchanges for children and teens.

Jacques and Katherine brought up their four children with two languages (French and English) and two cultures from day one. Each of their children did six month exchanges with a German child their own age and the two eldest also did second exchanges: Ian went to Spain and Kevin to Morocco.

The first child to try out Jacques and Katherine’s idea of long-term exchanges was **Xavier** Racinais in September 1978 when he was 9 years old. Xavier and his wife **Florence** are both teachers in the Bordeaux area: Florence teaches English and Xavier is a physical education teacher.

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|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>France</b>                      | <b>Florence Racinais</b> and her husband <b>Xavier</b> have two daughters: Mathilde and Mélisande. Both girls have done exchanges, including to the US and Spain.<br>florence@adolesco.org<br>xavier@adolesco.org                                    | <b>Yves-Noël Legoff</b> and his wife Karine have two children, Manon and Quentin. Both have had exchange experiences, in the US and the UK.<br><a href="mailto:yves-noel@adolesco.org">yves-noel@adolesco.org</a>  |
| <b>Spain</b>                       | <b>Marisol Vélez &amp; Alberto Cotillas</b> in Burgos, for Northern Spain. They have two daughters, Alicia and Eva who have both done long-term exchanges.<br>marisol@adolesco.org   | <b>Rosa Portugal Hidalgo</b> near Madrid for Central and Southern Spain. Alberto and Rosa have three children: Paula, Adela, and Matías. Paula and Adela have both done long-term exchanges.<br>rosa@adolesco.org  |
| <b>Germany</b>                     | <b>Sabine Krzikalla</b> and her husband Michael, who live near Bremen, have three daughters. Their youngest daughter, Annika, went to France for 6 months when she was 12 and welcomed her French sister for the same period.<br>sabine@adolesco.org | <b>Leona Hiddig</b> and her husband Bjorn have two children, Elio and Lilia. Leona works part-time for ZDFneo, a German TV channel. She came to her love of languages and foreign countries after her own long-term exchange in 1992<br><a href="mailto:leona.adolesco@gmx.de">leona.adolesco@gmx.de</a> |
| <b>North America:<br/>Colorado</b> | <b>Marie Meyer</b> , her husband Andrew, and their two children live in the Denver, Colorado area. The family enjoyed Kinri's Adolesco exchange with a French partner.<br>marie@adolesco.org   |  |
| <b>Other USA/<br/>Canada</b>       | <b>Kristin Bigelow</b> and her husband Majid Mirmiran have two children, Sebastian and Gemma. Both have done exchanges: Gemma to France, Spain, and Germany, and Sebastian to Spain.<br>kristin@adolesco.org   |  |