

SHINSHINIM HOST FAMILY GUIDE



THANK YOU!

First and foremost, we want to thank you for opening your home and welcoming a new temporary family member in the form of a ShinShin. We truly appreciate your willingness—this is by no means taken for granted—and we hope you find this opportunity to be a positive and enjoyable experience for your family.

This guide is intended to support you throughout the hosting period, provide some **general guidelines**, and help set **mutual expectations** between you and the ShinShinin to assist in creating a meaningful and smooth hosting experience in your home



WHAT IS THE SHINSHINIM PROGRAM?

The ShinShinim program is the “year of service program” that offers Israeli high school graduates an opportunity to delay mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces and serve Diaspora communities for up to 12 months. The program allows communities to meet young Israeli ambassadors who perform meaningful service prior to entering the army. The Shinshinim are working inside the Jewish community institutions, such as schools, synagogue etc, passing activities that contact the kids with Israel and their Jewish identity by bringing their own personal story. A growing program, the number of ShinShinim in Jewish communities more than quadrupled over the last decade.



HOST FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Basic needs:** Ensure the well-being of the Shinshin by providing proper nutrition, bedding, towels, and other basic needs.
2. **Supportive Environment:** Opening your home and heart by integrating the Shinshin into family life and creating a welcoming atmosphere.
3. **Open communication:** Create a culture of open communication by encouraging direct dialogue about concerns to prevent small issues from becoming bigger problems.



LIVING SPACE

As a host parent, your role in caring for the Shinshin is to ensure that they have proper accommodation, food, and are protected from danger. You should provide them with a personal bedroom with a door that can be closed for privacy, easy access to a bathroom and a work area. Privacy is important. Please make sure that the Shinshin has personal space, and that their room is not used for other purposes that may compromise their privacy.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

You may encounter significant cultural differences between you and your Shinshin. Be aware of this and encourage the Shinshin to talk about how they feel.

They may be negatively affected by the culture and need your help and guidance to deal with their feelings. Some of them may have already traveled abroad before, but for others this is the first time they are outside of Israel. Please be sensitive to issues that may arise. At times, you may have to act as a cultural consultant and explain behaviors that may seem strange. Acknowledging differences and connecting based on what we share is exactly what living bridges have to offer!

Your Shinshin may have periods of anxiety about not being in Israel while family and/or friends are serving in the IDF. This can be especially difficult during times of tension in the region. Just as you would with your own teenager, reach out and start a conversation.

As it is difficult as it can be for a teenager in your community to talk about their feelings, imagine this challenge exacerbated by the limitations of trying to express yourself in a foreign language. Remember that speaking in a foreign language is stressful and tiring at first. Don't be surprised if at first they choose to go to bed early. Please help your children understand the Shinshin's need for privacy and rest. Host parents in the past have reported that it sometimes takes time for things to settle down. Hosting requires effort, but the experience is very rewarding.

FOOD

On most days, the ShinShin will eat breakfast and dinner at your home. However, due to their busy schedule, they will often not be able to join you for dinner at regular hours. We recommend setting expectations in advance and choosing two specific days each week when you can sit down and have dinner together.

Before the ShinShin arrives, you will receive information from the supervisor regarding any allergies and dietary habits. Still, it is highly recommended to speak directly with the ShinShin upon their arrival to confirm their food preferences, allergies, and level of kashrut observance.

We also suggest taking them to the grocery store at least once, so they can choose some items they enjoy and are able to eat.



HOLIDAYS

The experience of holidays in the community can be very complex and emotionally charged for the Shinshin. Jewish holidays are an important part of Israel's national culture. The holidays naturally bring about feelings of longing and homesickness for family and friends, and the Shinshin may feel excited but also a little melancholy. Before a holiday, share information about how your family celebrates it.

Use this as an opportunity to learn about their family and traditions. It could be nice to incorporate some of their customs into your holiday celebrations this year. You may find that the Shinshin is more strict about following tradition on the major holidays, wanting to go to synagogue, not use electricity, etc. Please try to make this as easy for them as you can. Be sensitive, include them and show them that you understand.



TIME MANAGEMENT



Some host families have found that the Shinshin is so busy with community work and preparations that it becomes a challenge to find free time when both the host family and the Shinshin are available. Plan time to sit down with the Shinshin and go over their schedule. Designate specific times during the week when you can connect with each other. Ask the Shinshin for their schedule and hang it in a place where it can be checked as needed. We see spending time with the host family as an important part of the program's goal. Please inform your supervisor of any concerns.

The Shabbat meal is considered a special time for the Shinshin and the host family to connect. It is recommended to have the Shabbat meal together whenever possible. Your Shinshin will need time to prepare lesson plans, youth group activities, etc., and have regular meetings with their work partner. You may need to explain to your children that the Shinshin will not always be available. They are here to work and will occasionally have to spend time preparing.

During free time, school vacations, and/or weekends, try to include the Shinshin in your family's activities. They are here to experience and learn about typical life in the USA. The connections with teens their own age varies widely from year-to-year and often their ability to create a social life for themselves is the hardest component of the year. Please be sensitive to this issue and include the Shinshin in your family life, as appropriate. If your family's plans conflict with the Shinshin schedule, and the Shinshin is interested in joining you, please contact the supervisor with as much advance notice as possible to check if arrangements can be made to allow the Shinshin participation.

The Shinshin is not allowed to stay at your house overnight when an adult is not present. Should your family be leaving town for any reason, please inform the supervisor in advance. Shinshin can be moved to a temporary family or at another Shinshin's host family within the community and with prior approval from the supervisor.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Each ShinShin is insured through DavidShield, a subsidiary of PassportCard. The insurance is valid throughout the entire duration of the service year, including during their time at summer camps.

In case of need, it is the ShinShin's responsibility to activate the insurance by sending a WhatsApp message in Hebrew to the following number: +972-50-668-7695

ILLNESS IN THE HOST FAMILY

If a member of the host family has a serious illness that could affect the hosting experience while the Shinshin is staying in the home, the policy of the program is to remove the Shinshin from the home. This is for the well-being of the family and the Shinshin. We ask the supervisor to volunteer to temporarily host the Shinshin until a solution or alternative family is found.



MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

A success of hosting for both the family and the Shinshin is setting your expectations. To ensure a smooth hosting session with open communication, we kindly request that you review this checklist with your Shinshin upon their arrival at your home.

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✓ Is there a code/alarm to the house?
- ✓ Do you take off shoes when entering- where should they be placed?
- ✓ Does everyone take turns bringing out the garbage?
What other household responsibilities would you like the Shinshin to share?
- ✓ Who changes the bed sheets and how often?
- ✓ How does your family handle laundry?
How and when should the Shinshin plan to do their laundry?
- ✓ Do you employ a housekeeper or cleaning person?
If so, please describe their responsibilities.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

- ✓ Discuss the levels of Kashrut and Shabbat observance in your home and the Shinshin's practices. Work together to create arrangements where everyone feels comfortable observing to their desired extent.

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

MEALS AND DINING

- ✓ What time is dinner? Does the family eat together?
- ✓ How should the Shinshin communicate whether they'll be home for dinner, and by what time?
- ✓ If timing doesn't work to eat together, will dinner be prepared and left in the fridge, or will the Shinshin prepare their own meal?
- ✓ What are your family's favorite breakfast and dinner foods/recipes/meals?
- ✓ What foods does the Shinshin like/dislike?
- ✓ Lunch: What can the Shinshin make for lunch at school? Is there a morning family routine regarding lunches?

KITCHEN RESPONSIBILITIES AND FOOD ACCESS

- ✓ Do you expect the Shinshin to wash dishes in the sink or load/unload the dishwasher?
- ✓ Does your family rinse dishes before putting them in the dishwasher?
- ✓ Is the Shinshin welcome to help themselves to food from the refrigerator and cupboards? Show them where snacks and drinks are kept.
- ✓ Is there a system for noting consumed food for the shopping list?
- ✓ Is there anything specific the Shinshin would like you to buy? Would they like to join you at the supermarket?
- ✓ Can the Shinshin have food in their room?
- ✓ If there are food allergies in the home, please share pertinent information and ask about the Shinshin's allergies.

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

BATHROOM

- ✓ How does the shower work? (Shower faucets differ between Israel and North America)
- ✓ Where are towels, toilet paper, and other supplies kept?
- ✓ Where is the toilet plunger located?
- ✓ Ensure the Shinshin understands how to turn off water in case of a clogged toilet
- ✓ Discuss toiletries and bathroom sharing arrangements

Please see this as a base talking point and add to it any extra points as you like such as creating a WhatsApp group, shared google calendar, etc.

FOR ANY QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS
YOU ARE WELCOME TO CONTACT WITH THE SHINSHINIM SUPERVISOR.

Name:

Contact number:

Email: