



SAN MATEO  
COLLEGES  
of Silicon Valley

# Handbook for International Students

## HOMESTAY REFERRAL PROGRAM



SAN MATEO COUNTY  
**COMMUNITY**  
COLLEGE DISTRICT

3401 CSM DRIVE, SAN MATEO, CA 94402 USA

*Cañada College • College of San Mateo • Skyline College*

# Table of Contents

---

<b>International Housing Staff</b> .....	2
<b>Housing Options &amp; Costs</b> .....	3
<b>Homestay Program Policies</b> .....	4
<b>Opening a Bank Account</b> .....	8
<b>Transportation</b> .....	9
<b>San Mateo County Transit Bus (SamTrans)</b> .....	10
<b>Bay Area Rapid Transit Train (BART)</b> .....	9
<b>California Commuter Rail Line (CalTrain)</b> .....	9
<b>Clipper</b> .....	11
<b>California Driver's License</b> .....	11

## International Housing Staff

*Chikako Walker, Director of International Education: [walkerchikako@smccd.edu](mailto:walkerchikako@smccd.edu)*



Chikako Walker is the Acting Director of International Education for the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD). In this role, she works closely with the international education teams at all three colleges on key areas such as student recruitment, admissions, support services and program development. She is also responsible for overseeing the district's Homestay Referral Program. Originally from Japan, Chikako has more than 15 years of professional experience in the field of International Education. Prior to joining SMCCCD, she served in a variety of roles at higher education institutions in the U.S., Australia and Japan. Chikako holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Waseda University, Japan, and a Master of Arts degree in International Education from New York University, U.S.

*Julnar Msalam, Housing Program Coordinator: [housingcoordinator@smccd.edu](mailto:housingcoordinator@smccd.edu)*



As an International Student Housing Program Coordinator for the three colleges in the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD), Julnar is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with host families throughout the community. She supervises the general housing inquiries, recruits new families, approves home visits, processes background checks, manages the homestay database, initiates' homestay referrals, and matches students with compatible host families. Julnar has worked in the Counseling and Transfer Department, as well as helping students in the Associate's to Bachelor program for six years. Julnar has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from the University of Jerash in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

*Jia Chuan Lu, International Program Specialist: [housingcoordinator@smccd.edu](mailto:housingcoordinator@smccd.edu)*



Jia Chuan Lu is the International Education Program Specialist for the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD). He assists with the coordination and implementation of the District Homestay Referral Program. He is a highly motivated and experienced professional who is committed to helping international students succeed and thrive during their time at college. He has a deep understanding of unique challenges faced by international students, and he is dedicated to providing them with the guidance, support, and resources they need to succeed academically and personally. He earned a bachelor degree in Business Administration from UC Berkeley, Haas School of Business.

## Housing Options & Costs

---

### **Option 1:** Private room with meals: \$1,775/month

This option is for students who desire a private room and 2 meals every day. The family will provide the student with a hot dinner and breakfast items, with full access to the kitchen to prepare their own lunch.

### **Option 2:** Private room without meals: \$1,275/month

This option is for students who desire a private room but choose to take care of all their own meals. The host family will provide the student access to the kitchen for cooking, with cabinet and refrigerator space to store food.

### **Option 3:** Shared Room with meals: \$1,375/month

This option is for students who desire a shared room with another international student of the same gender, and 2 meals every day. The family will provide the student with a hot dinner and breakfast items, with full access to the kitchen to prepare their own lunch. A second student to share the room is ***never guaranteed*** with this option.

### **Option 4:** Shared Room without meals: \$875/month

This option is for students who desire a shared room with another international student of the same gender, but choose to take care of all their own meals. The host family will provide the student access to the kitchen for cooking, with cabinet and refrigerator space to store food. A second student to share the room is ***never guaranteed*** with this option.

## Homestay Program Policies

### Placement and Change Fees:

Students must pay a **\$300** application Placement Fee to be matched with a host family. Prior to the completion of the initial two months, they must stay with the same host family unless they are requesting to leave due to any of the valid reasons stated below.

### Valid reasons for placing a student at a new homestay without charging a fee are:

- 1) There is a real or implied threat of harm towards the student.
- 2) The student's bedroom is not as pictured or described in the host's profile.
- 3) The host family alters the terms of the original homestay agreement (Example: A family stops providing meals for their student, or increases the rent.)
- 4) The host family is unable to continue hosting the student due to personal reasons not caused by the student.

**Unless they have one of the valid reasons listed above**, students will be charged a **\$100** Change Fee each time they wish to change their homestay placement after the initial two months. There is no fee if students want to continue living with the same host family.

### Rent:

The Homestay Referral Program does not manage or negotiate rental payments; it is strictly between the host and the student. On the first day of moving in, students must pay the host two months' rent, according to their homestay option, plus a refundable security deposit of \$500. After the first two months, students can request to move out (with a 30-day written notice) or continue living with the same host, but paying rent on a monthly basis.

Students who decide to move out prior to the completion of two months will not get a refund of the prepaid two months' rent. However, extreme situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. At any time during their participation in the Homestay Referral Program, if a student is asked to move out because they have broken a house rule after repeated warnings, the remainder of that month's rent will not be refunded.

However, if the host asks the student to move out, and the student has not broken any house rules, the host must refund the student any unused prepaid rent. The refund amount must be given to the student the day that they move out. In both cases, the security deposit will be calculated according to the policy outlined in the next section.

In case of a shared room, if a student's roommate decides to move out, they will continue to pay the same rental rate while the Homestay Referral Program works on finding another student to be matched with the host family. If the host is unable to accommodate this, they must give the student a 30-day eviction notice.

## Security Deposit:

If the student chooses to move out of their homestay early and does not provide the host family with 30-day written notice, the student may risk losing some or all of their \$500 security deposit, if the funds are needed to pay any rent left owing.

The student is expected to leave their room in the same condition as when they moved in, except for normal wear and tear. The student may be held responsible for any damages caused by visitors (friends and family) that they have invited into the home, and funds from the security deposit can be used to repair such damages.

After a student moves out, the host family has 30 days to either return the deposit, or give a written statement of why all or part of the money is being kept. If a student moves out early, the host family may keep part or all of the security deposit to pay rent that would be due. If any funds are used for cleaning or repairs the family will provide the student with receipts showing the cost of services or repairs performed.

## Additional Fees:

As long as the host is participating in the Program, even after the initial two months, they must honor the rental rate set by the Program. In addition, they may not charge the student additional fees for utilities and internet.

Students are responsible for purchasing their own snacks, no matter what their housing option is. For options 1 and 3, they should be provided food for breakfast and dinner every day, with full access to the kitchen to prepare their lunch.

Some host families offer the following services for an additional fee. The fees are separate from the Homestay Fees and should be negotiated between the student and the host. The host can choose not to charge the student for any of the services listed. However, if the host requires compensation for these **optional** fees, the student may request to be matched with another host. In that case, the host must refund the \$500 deposit and any unused prepared rent.

1. **Cleaning Fee:** the host can hire a professional to occasionally clean the house, including the student's bedroom and bathroom. The host can split this expense with the student.
2. **Lunch Fee:** if the student does not want to prepare their own lunch, they can ask the host to provide them with lunch for a fee that will not exceed \$10/meal.
3. **Driving Fee:** most hosts will occasionally provide free rides to the grocery store, movie theater, school, etc. However, a payment plan can be developed if the student wants a ride to school every day, or to be driven to far destinations.

## What is Provided:

Per the SMCCCD homestay agreement, host families must provide a room that is furnished with a bed, linens, chest of drawers, desk, chair, closet and window. For shared rooms, two beds and desks must

comfortably fit in the room and there is enough closet space for two students. Internet and utilities are included in the rental agreement and no additional bills should be charged to the student for payment.

It is expected that the student respects the facilities in the home and follow the host's rules for the space in the home. If a student uses the house phone for long distance calls, they will pay for them. San Mateo County Community College District does not recommend that the student be allowed to make long distance calls on the family phone bill.

In addition to the bathroom and kitchen access, students will have access to the laundry room to wash their clothes. The student should provide their own laundry soap and not use the hosts' detergent unless instructed by the host family. If the host family does not have a washer and dryer in unit, they must provide the student with money to wash their clothes at a laundromat. Students are also responsible for purchasing their own personal hygiene products like deodorant, shampoo, razor, etc.

### **Holiday and Semester Breaks:**

Students who plan to leave for an extended period of time during the holiday or semester breaks must inform the host family whether they plan to return to live in their homestay or not. If the student would like to continue living with the host family, the student will continue to pay the required rent during their absence to remain in the room.

If the student is not returning to the same homestay after the semester break and the remaining rent does not cover the days when they are away, they may not store their belongings there. Some host families may offer storage space for a fee, but this should be discussed and negotiated between the student and the host.

If the host is traveling for an extended period of time, they must ensure the student will still get two meals a day. If the student is under 18 years old, the host must inform the Housing Program Coordinator in advance and provide the contact information of an adult who will be checking in on the minor student. The host cannot leave the minor student unsupervised.

### **House Rules and Federal Law:**

During the first week of arrival, we encourage host families to go over house rules and expectations with the student. If the student repeatedly breaks the house rules, the host family can evict them from their house. That will disqualify the student from being in our Homestay Program and they will be responsible for finding accommodation on their own.

Students must obey local, state and federal law. Drinking alcohol and smoking are prohibited until age 21. Smoking is not allowed in most homes. Illegal drugs are prohibited for persons of any age and students should not be associated with anyone involved with illegal drugs in any way.

Although California has legalized marijuana, it is still illegal to buy, smoke, or grow marijuana under federal law in the United States. The F1 Visa is a federal visa so international students must adhere to

federal laws at all times. If a student is caught smoking marijuana (even if they have a medical marijuana card), their F1 visa status could be revoked and they could be expelled from their program of study.

### **Communication:**

Students should directly communicate with the host family their move-in and move-out dates. They should also notify the host if they do not plan to be home for a certain period of time, especially if they have chosen a homestay option with a meal plan. It's better to ask the host to clarify what the house rules are than to unintentionally break them and be asked to move out.

Misunderstandings happen due to language barrier, cultural differences, or lack of communication. It is important for students to directly communicate with their host family if they are concerned or unhappy about something. If it's a serious situation, students should immediately inform the staff members of the Homestay Referral Program so they may intervene and offer assistance.

### **Public Transportation:**

Our homestay referral program requires that each family lives within a 60-minute bus ride to the college (including transfers, and walk to bus stop). The host must teach the student how to buy a bus pass and show them where the closest bus stop is located. If it takes longer than 60 minutes to commute to school by bus, students should notify the Homestay Program Coordinator immediately so they can be relocated, free of charge.

The student is responsible for purchasing their own bus fare or "clipper card" for public transportation. It is the students' responsibility to determine their own transportation schedule and plan accordingly when needing to commute to class, campus, or other locations. If a host decides to provide transportation to and from a location, that service is voluntary and not required by our program.

### **Privacy laws and Liability Release Form:**

As an institution, we uphold the regulations by the U.S. Department of Education to implement the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for each student who applies to our homestay referral program. Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personal, identifiable information from an eligible student's education records to a third party unless the eligible student has provided written consent.

Students under the age of 18 and their parent(s) must sign a liability release form to be in our program. The release form specifically states that the parent(s) acknowledge that their child is under the age of eighteen (legal adult status in the United States), and that they - not the host family, nor San Mateo County Community College District - San Mateo Colleges of Silicon Valley – will be held responsible for their child's actions while the student lives in the United States. The parent(s) agree to pay the full amount for any and all damages in the homestay for which their child is responsible, regardless of whether the damages were accidental. The parent(s) also agree to release all liabilities for any injury, loss, damage, accident, delay or expense resulting from participation in the homestay program.

## Opening a Bank Account

At the time of admission, all international (F-1 Visa) students are required by federal law to document adequate funding for study. We expect that all students will have sufficient funds for tuition, fees, books, health insurance, living expenses and other miscellaneous costs. We recommend that all students open a checking account at a local bank or financial institution. When opening a bank account, the student will need to bring:

- 2 forms of Identification:
  - Passport
  - U.S. driver's license or college campus identification card
- SEVIS Form I-20 and;
- Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record;
- Enrollment verification letter from the school or a letter from the homestay program

Once students have a U.S. bank account number, they will be able to send the information to their home bank in order to make transferring money easier and faster. It's also a good idea for students to inform their parents or relatives about the transfer options.

### Banks near CSM

CitiBank  
61 W. Hillsdale Blvd.  
[online.citi.com/US/login.do](https://online.citi.com/US/login.do)

San Mateo Credit Union  
1515 South El Camino Real  
[www.smcu.org](http://www.smcu.org)

Bank of America  
3150 Campus Drive  
[www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com)

Wells Fargo Bank  
100 DeAnza Blvd.  
[www.wellsfargo.com](http://www.wellsfargo.com)

Chase  
1730 South El Camino Real  
[www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)

### Banks near Skyline College

US Bank  
2255 Gellert Blvd  
[www.usbank.com/index.html](http://www.usbank.com/index.html)

Chase  
Westborough Blvd #601  
[www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)

### Banks near Cañada College

CitiBank  
702 Marshall Street #100  
(650)569-4913  
[online.citi.com/US/login.do](https://online.citi.com/US/login.do)

First Republic Bank  
776 El Camino Real  
(650)216-8883  
[www.firstrepublic.com](http://www.firstrepublic.com)

Bank of America  
700 Jefferson Avenue  
(650)562-0705  
[www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com)

Wells Fargo Bank  
1070 El Camino Real  
(650)368-9940  
[www.wellsfargo.com](http://www.wellsfargo.com)

Chase  
1615 Woodside Road  
(650)306-4080  
[www.chase.com](http://www.chase.com)

## Transportation

SamTrans provides bus services along several routes to our college campus.

### 3 bus routes to College of San Mateo:

- Route 250 (San Mateo downtown and Caltrain)
- Route 260 (San Carlos Caltrain, Redwood Shores & Belmont)
- Route 294 (Half Moon Bay)



### 2 bus routes to Cañada College:

- Route 274
- Route 278

### 2 bus routes to Skyline College:

- Routes 121: starts at Lowell and Hanover streets, then serves the Daly City BART station, Seton Medical Center, Colma BART, Serramonte, Fairmont and Westview on its way to the College.
- Route 140: delivers students traveling from Pacifica and San Bruno BART.

*Weekend note:* The 140 is the only line that provides service to the College on weekends.

**Routing information** is available at 1-800-660-4287, [www.samtrans.com](http://www.samtrans.com), and [511.org](http://511.org).

### Bay Area Rapid Transit Train (BART)



BART is a public transportation system serving the San Francisco Bay Area. The rapid transit elevated and subway system connects San Francisco with cities in the East Bay and the northern portion of San Mateo County. BART's rapid transit system operates 5 routes on 104 miles of track, with 44 stations in 4 counties, which are Alameda County, Contra Costa County, City and County of San Francisco, and San Mateo County. BART connects to Daly City, Colma, and San Bruno. For more information, visit [www.bart.gov](http://www.bart.gov).

**Daly City BART shuttle to Skyline College:** The Skyline College Express shuttle service (<http://www.skylinecollege.edu/maps/shuttle.php>) will run every hour from 7:25 a.m. to 6:44 p.m., Mondays to Fridays. The 28-person shuttle service will be open to students, faculty and staff as well as community members who utilize the services available on campus such as SparkPoint, the Library and Veterans Resource Center. You can pick up the Daly City Bart shuttle downstairs from the platform. Turn right as you exit the ticket area, and cross the street to the shuttle stop.

### California Commuter Rail Line (CalTrain)

Caltrain provides commuter rail service along the San Francisco Peninsula, through the South Bay to San Jose and Gilroy. The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company began passenger rail service on the Peninsula in 1863. The system we know today as Caltrain had its start in 1992, when the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board took over the operation of the train. For more information, visit [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com).



## San Mateo County Transit Bus (SamTrans)

### College of San Mateo (CSM) Shuttle Services:

CSM shuttle service has served students since early April with hourly pick-ups and drop-offs between the Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station and campus. It runs Monday–Thursday from 7:10 am – 2:15 pm and 4:00 pm – 10:25 pm during the summer session. Employees are now welcome to ride the shuttle as well. Stops include:

- Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station
- CSM Athletic Center (Building 5)
- CSM Science Building and Planetarium (Building 36)
- CSM College Center (Building 10)

View the [Shuttle Quick Start Guide](#) for details on stop locations and the TripShot Rider application for smartphones. For a full route schedule and the latest details, visit our [CSM Shuttle](#) page.

### Skyline College Shuttle Services:

The Skyline College Express shuttle service runs every hour for Fall Terms, 7:25AM - 6:44PM during Fall and Spring Terms, Monday through Friday to and from Daly City BART. During Summer Term, the Shuttle operates Monday through *Thursday*, serving similarly scheduled times (7:25AM - 9:14AM, 10:25AM - 5:44PM) but *excluding* the 9:25AM - 10:14AM and 5:55PM - 6:44PM route times.

The 28-person shuttle service is open to students, faculty and staff as well as community members who utilize the services available on campus such as SparkPoint, the Library and Veterans Resource Center. Those who come to campus to attend performing arts, athletics, guest lectures or other college events are also welcome to use this convenient service.

The free shuttle service aims to make it easier, and more affordable, for students and community members to get to campus and make use of the valuable resources that Skyline College provides.

### Cañada College Bus and train:

Cañada College is now served by one SamTrans route [278](#) and route 78. <https://www.samtrans.com/blog/2017/08/ride-samtrans-canada-college>

## Clipper

The all-in-one transit card that keeps track of any passes, discount tickets, ride books and cash value that you load onto it. Used for travel on SamTrans and Caltrain. Our office recommends that students learn about the benefits of using a clipper card for any of their public transportation needs. For more information on obtaining a card please visit [www.clippercard.com](http://www.clippercard.com)



## California Driver's License

Students must have a California Driver's License to drive in the State of California. New student will need to wait at least 10 days after entering the United States before applying for CA driver's license and the student's SEVIS record must be registered by the college administrator before applying as well. The 10-day waiting period allows time for all the government databases to be updated with student arrival information. If applying prior to 10 days, the application may be denied or delayed. The DMV will require proof of birth date and legal status when applying for a driver's license. Students should be prepared to show the following documents:



- Form I-20
- Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record –To access the electronic form students need to go to [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94) and print a copy.
- Passport with visa (if applicable)
- Students do not need a social security number to apply for a California driver's license. However, if requested to show a social security card, students will need to get a letter from the Social Security office verifying that the student is not eligible for a social security number. For more information on obtaining a California Driver's License, please visit the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website [www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv).

The international student centers on each college campus can also provide students with further detailed information.



---

## **International Education Homestay Referral Program**

3401 CSM Drive  
San Mateo, CA 94402  
United States

Phone: (650) 358-6856

Email: [housingcoordinator@smccd.edu](mailto:housingcoordinator@smccd.edu)

Website: [smccd.edu/international/housing.php](http://smccd.edu/international/housing.php)

