



SANTA MONICA SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION

Student Ambassador Exchange Guidelines and Information

About Santa Monica and Sister Cities

The International Sister City program is based on the idea that citizen-to-citizen contacts among countries will promote better relations and peace. Santa Monica Sister City Association (SMSCA) has three Sister Cities: Mazatlán, Mexico (established in 1961), Hamm, Germany (since 1969) and Fujinomiya, Japan (since 1975). There are also two Friendship Cities in Kizugawa, Japan (since 2016), and Brighton-Kove, England (since 2022). The SMSCA sponsors student ambassadors to these cities in the spirit of citizen-to-citizen international relations.

About the Student Ambassador Program

High school students, preferably residents of Santa Monica, may apply as goodwill ambassadors to Mazatlán, Hamm, Fujinomiya, Kizugawa or Brighton-Kove under the sponsorship of SMSCA. Selected students will host ambassadors from sister cities in their homes for two weeks and spend two weeks in the homes of their students in their respective cities. While abroad, students will act as goodwill ambassadors, sharing information about our city and culture with students and others while participating in a variety of activities arranged by their host families. Students also will experience typical family life, culture and customs and local sights while living with host families.

2024 Dates

Outbound - July 30 - August 8, 2024

Santa Monica students visit Mazatlan, Hamm, Fujinomiya, Kizugawa or Brighton.

Inbound - August 8 - August 17, 2024

Hosting students from Mazatlan, Hamm, Fujinomiya, Kizugawa or Brighton in Santa Monica

These dates are somewhat flexible due to airline scheduling, but 10 days in each city.

Giving Back

This is an exchange program. Families of the Santa Monica student ambassadors are expected to host student ambassadors while they are in Santa Monica. In addition to having the student stay in their home and providing meals, this includes planning meaningful activities and providing transportation to all activities, including those planned by the SMSCA.

Students are encouraged to communicate back to Santa Monica during their stay abroad offering details and photos of their experiences during their trip by posting to social media including the SMSCA Facebook page, blogging, etc.

Following their trip students are encouraged to submit reports to the SMSCA for use on the SMSCA website, newspapers and other media. Students are also expected to share their experiences with other students, civic groups, city officials or others. Articles in school newspapers, interviews with local media, an appearance before Santa Monica City Council, presentations at SMSCA meetings are all possible means of sharing their experiences with the community and promoting the program.

The success of an ambassador program depends upon the commitment and motivation of the student and their parent(s)/guardians. For an effective exchange, all family members must enthusiastically accept the ambassador student in their home. SMSCA has developed a number of policies that must be followed by a student participating in an exchange program. Failure of a student to adhere to these policies may result in termination of the student's participation.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible students must:

1. Be of good character. They must be well behaved, polite, courteous and eager to represent a positive image of America; be willing to follow the directions of host parents; be eager to learn about another culture, be tolerant of differences and enjoy meeting and sharing experiences with others; and be willing to participate in all activities both during the exchange abroad and when hosting in Santa Monica.
2. Maintain a 2.0 GPA or better in academic grades.
3. Not have any unsatisfactory or "needs improvement" grades on their report card in work habits and/or citizenship.
4. Provide two references from current teachers, instructors, coaches and a personal reference from a long-time adult acquaintance. Confidential reference forms must be sent directly to SMSCA and will not be accepted if they are attached to the application.
5. Not have medical needs that require attention beyond the expertise of the host families.
6. Does not smoke, drink alcohol or use any type of illegal drugs.

Selection Procedure and Timeline

General Information

1. SMSCA will help coordinate travel arrangements so that all students will travel together. Round-trip airfare, host family gifts, passport (must be valid for at least six months post travel time), and spending money for their child will be the parents' responsibility. Parents may also want to consider buying travel insurance. Limited scholarships to assist with airfare may be available through the Santa Monica Sister City Foundation, based on financial need.

2. Students are expected to attend all SMSCA sponsored pre-and post-trip activities, including a fundraiser to support the student ambassador exchange program. Failure to do so can result in students not being able to participate in the exchange.

3. If students display inappropriate or unacceptable behavior during the pre-trip activities, SMSCA can and will withdraw the students from the visit. The parents will be responsible for any costs incurred by SMSCA as a result of this action. SMSCA will not reimburse any monies spent by the family.

4. Once in the host city, students will be expected to treat their host families, chaperones and all other students and adults with courtesy and respect and to display the highest standards of good conduct. Failure to do so may result in the student being sent home, unchaperoned, with any additional expenses to be incurred by the parents.

5. While in the host city, students will be expected to dress in a manner in keeping with a young representative of Santa Monica and the United States. Clothing should be neat, clean, modest and presentable as well as void of any impolite jargon/slogan or symbols.

6. Students/families agree to reciprocate and host Sister City students that visit Santa Monica.

7. Students will keep a log of activities and write a follow-up reflective statement for the SMSCA to keep on file (suggest doing this during their return flight).

8. Electronics (anything with an on/off switch) may be brought for use during the flights. While cell phones may be used if that is the primary camera, but no other electronics may be used during touring and other arranged activities if they interfere with the student's active participation in the activity. Any loss of electronics is the sole responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Medical Treatment

Host families agree to treat the exchange student as their own child for the purposes of seeking any required medical treatment. Families of students traveling are required to have medical insurance that covers medical care for their child. Prior to any medical/dental care, the host family MUST contact/inform the parents/guardian except for emergency care. The costs of medical treatment are paid either by the student or the student's family at the time of the treatment. Should a student not be able to pay at the time of treatment, the student's family is obligated to reimburse the host family any and all outstanding medical costs, and then recover from their own insurance carrier if possible.

Termination of Student Participation

Should the student or parents fail to comply with any of the above-stated policies, SMSCA reserves the right to terminate the student exchange and may also require the student or the student's parents or guardians to pay additional costs associated with the student's return.

Waiver

SMSCA assumes no legal responsibility for the actions, debts, expenses, safety, or health of the students participating in the exchange beyond the normal precautions that will be taken.

Contact the Santa Monica Sister City Association President for inquiries at:
presidentsmsca@gmail.com