



The Shinshinim Host Family Information Guide

The Westchester Shlichut Initiative



“Todah rabah - Thank you!” for taking time and considering being a host family to a Shinshin (young Israeli emissary). The Westchester Jewish Council is very excited to continue this amazing program, for the second year, in our very own community.

This is a fun and enriching opportunity for both your family and for the young adult to whom you are opening your home. Families who have been hosts to shinshin in the past have found the experience extremely rewarding and have created lifelong relationships with their shinshin.

The information included will answer some of your questions and will act as a guide to make this very unique opportunity an amazing experience for your entire family. If you do become a host family you will receive more detailed information.

Who are the Shinshinim?

A “Shinshin” is an 18 year old Israeli Emissary sent by the Israeli Government and the Jewish Agency for Israel to communities abroad and with the goal of educating people of all ages about Israel and Israeli culture. These bright and talented young adults have made the difficult decision to postpone their army service to participate in this rewarding program.

The Westchester community shinshinim have been selected from over a pool of 400 applicants and in addition to the training they receive to participate in this program they come to our community with a long list of impressive experiences and skills. Our Shinshinim are leaders in their home communities, excel academically and artistically and are fluent in English.

What will they be doing?

Our Shinshinim will provide informal programming to build Jewish identity and educate children, teens and adults about our Jewish homeland. The shinshinim will work with participating synagogues, Jewish day schools, youth movements and/or supplementary schools to teach about Israel and Israeli culture and Jewish celebrations. Additionally, they will work with the program coordinator, our Westchester Shlichah, to create community-wide programs about Israel.



Shinshinim will have very busy days in our community as they become a living bridge between the community and Israel. They will help with synagogue youth groups, teen groups, and will impact virtually every part of the synagogue congregational life. The Shinshinim will assist in day school and religious school classrooms as well as participate in extracurricular and school wide programming. A typical weekly schedule for the Shinshinim is below. If you become a host family, part of your responsibility will be to review the shinshin's schedule to help them get settled and understand their time commitments.

The shinshinim will meet as a group once a week for training and professional development sessions run by the Community Shlichah. Sessions will range in topic from educational theory to planning activities effectively to current events in Israel to streams of Judaism and more-- all with the goal of enriching the shinshinim's skill set and capacities as leaders and educators. These professional development sessions are also an opportunity for group bonding and sharing which is an essential component of the network of support we are trying to build for the Shinshinim throughout the year.

We encourage you to consider and include the Shinshinim in your family planning. The Shinshinim schedules may vary but they will have 1 to 2 days off a week usually on Friday and sometimes either Saturday or Sunday. The community Shlichah is responsible for their schedules and will act as the point person for any questions or concerns. Before making plans that include the shinshin host families should discuss the schedule with the community Shlichah.



Draft Weekly Schedule 2017-2018

| | Monday | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------|--------|------|-----|-------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|
| 8-12 | | | | | | D A Y O F F | |
| 12-4 | | | | | | | |
| 4-6 | | | | | | | |
| 6-9 | | | | | | | |

COLOR CODE:

Day School

Religious School

Family Program

Synagogue Program

Youth Program

Professional Devel. &

Planning Time



Becoming a Host Family

Your time as a host can be an amazing and rewarding experience for every member of your family. Host families have come from very diverse backgrounds and do not have to speak Hebrew.

Your home should have a spare bedroom so that the shinshin can have his/her private space that is not used for other household purposes. Host families should still have school-age children or teenagers living at home – becoming a part of a family with children makes it much easier for an Israeli teen to get acclimated into American life.

In order to be considered as host family, an application must be completed. A Jewish Agency staff member will review the application and set up a home visit to meet your family and answer questions. All family members living at home must be present at this meeting. The Jewish Agency will require a full tour of your home including the shinshin's potential room.

If you are selected to host!

It is very reassuring for their parents to get to know the people their son/daughter will be living with. You should contact the shinshin and his/her Israeli family before the shinshin moves in. They will want to know about your family, your home and the community. Shinshinim Israeli families have always appreciated photos of their son/daughter's host family. Remember these are 18 year old young adults who are far away from their family.

Once they move in, the shinshin will become a part of your family and household. Be sure to show them where things are located and how things work. We encourage you to treat them as members of your household. They must live by the rules of your home. We encourage you to speak candidly about how your home functions.

Please remember these are young adults who have been chosen for their maturity, skills and considerable experience. It is important to balance that with your



household rules, including any rules you may have regarding curfew. As with all 18 year old young adults, the Shinshinim may start their social evening much later than we do. They may be getting ready to go out when you are going to bed!

Host parents are encouraged to treat their shinshin as they would treat their own eighteen-year-old son or daughter. The shinshin should always be included in family activities when their work schedule allows it. Host families should always know where their Shinshin is and when s/he is expected home. The shinshin may be expected to pitch in around the house or run an occasional errand. Shinshin may watch younger children in the house or care for pets occasionally, but they are not here for the purpose of providing domestic help and should not be expected to do those types of tasks regularly.

When a shinshin's work schedule allows it, host families are encouraged to take them along on family trips and vacations. If a host family must travel without their shinshin, it is not recommended that shinshin be left alone overnight in the host family's home. Arrangements can be made with the community Shlichah to find other accommodations.

Transportation

The shinshinim will have a car and car insurance that will be paid for by the Westchester Jewish Council.

Food

Food is particularly important in the hosting relationship. As with all members of your family, please be sure they know the rules of food in your home. As you would do with your own teen, please be sure they have food to eat when they come home late from work. They may be too shy to ask, so you may need to approach them.

If you are going out to dinner without your shinshin, as you would with your own teen, please be sure they have food to eat if they are not joining you. Please remember that in the beginning they will be totally overwhelmed by their experience, not to mention the language.



Your shinshin will need to take a lunch most days. Please make sure to clarify a system around this with the Shinshin. Will you make it when you are making lunch for your other children? Do you want the shinshin to make his/her own lunch? Either system is fine, but please makes sure it is communicated clearly to the Shinshin! The shinshinim are on a very tight budget so purchasing lunch will use up much of their stipend.

Cell phones

Every shinshin receives a cell phone and a monthly plan from the Westchester Jewish Council that includes texting and voicemail. The cell phone is a critical tool for communication and safety. The cell phone plan will have the capability to make international phones.

Curfew and Free Time

The Shinshinim have a nightly curfew. They are expected to be at your home by 11 pm each night whether or not they have work the next day. Exceptions can be made in advance with the approval of the Community Shlichah. Reasons for a later curfew may include: a work obligation for participation in special program, a desire to attend a program or event outside of the work framework, or doing something with their host family. On weekends the Shinshinim may have a later curfew but they need to be at you house by 1am.

During their free time and days-off, Shinshinim must adhere to all rules including curfew.

The Israeli parents of the Shinshinim may visit during the year. These visits will be coordinated with the community Shlichah and may result in time away from your home.



Health Insurance

Health Insurance will be provided for Shinshim through a plan provided by the Jewish Agency for Israel. Details will be provided at a later date.

If you have concerns about your shinshin's health, please contact the Community Shlichah. Please follow the following protocol:

- Encourage the shinshin to talk to you, his/her host parents, when he/she feels sick..
- In the case of illness the shinshin must inform the community Shlichah. If required, s/he will take the shinshin to the doctor that has been designated as the group doctor. If you prefer to take the shinshin to the doctor, this is absolutely fine as well.
- In case of medical emergency, please take the shinshin to the emergency room, and contact the community Shlichah as soon as possible.
- Encourage the shinshin to ask the doctor questions and be sure to understand their diagnosis and treatment.
- If your dentist or family doctor is willing to see the Shinshin, you can take your Shinshin to him/her. Please notify the community Shlichah.

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 times when the host family and the shinshin are both free. Plan a time to sit down with your shinshin and review their schedule and then identify and designate specific times during the week that you both know you will be able to connect with each other. Ask your shinshin for his/her schedule and post it where you can check it as needed. We view spending time with the host family an important component of the mission of the program. Please communicate any concerns around this issue to the community Shlichah.

Your shinshin will need time to prepare lesson plans, youth group activities etc. and meet regularly with his/her work partner. You may need to explain to your children that your shinshin will not always be available. They are here to work and so need to spend time preparing.



Vacations

If your family is going on vacation you can include your shinshin in the trip, as with all other family activities, if you deem it appropriate and feasible. However, please consult the community Shlichah directly about your plans well in advance to discuss your shinshin's availability. If it is not feasible for your shinshin to join you, please speak with the community Shlichah early enough so alternate hosting arrangements can be made for the shinshin. The shinshin may not stay alone in your house while you are on vacation. They need to stay with another shinshin or another family. This needs to be discussed with the shinshin, the community Shlichah and host family together. The Shinshinim will have a scheduled vacation to return to Israel for a break during the middle of the year. They will all go home and return to NY at the same time.

As part of their training the Shinshinim will travel for "National Shlichim Professional Training Seminar" in USA in November for few days. They will probably participate at conferences with their synagogues a long the year.

Finances

The Shinshinim Program provides a small monthly stipend to each Shinshin. They also receive a clothing allowance for winter coats, boots, hats, gloves and scarves. The Shinshinim are here to volunteer and their visa does not allow them to work for pay. They are not allowed to babysit or tutor for money.

Holidays

Holidays can be very difficult. Jewish holidays are the national culture of Israel and it is different here in North America. Holidays inevitably bring a longing for family and friends. The Shinshinim may become wistful and subdued. Before a holiday, share with your shinshin how your family observes the holiday. Use this as an opportunity to learn more about his/her family and their observance. Perhaps incorporate some of your shinshin's customs from home into your family's observances this year. You may find that your shinshin becomes more observant during the holidays. They may want to walk to synagogue, not use electricity, etc. Please try to accommodate



him/her as best you can. Try to be sensitive, include them, and show them that you understand and care!

Cultural Differences

There are tremendous similarities in culture and values between Israelis and North Americans. However, there are also significant cultural differences. Be aware and encourage your shinshin to talk about how they are feeling. They will experience culture shock and they need your help and guidance to work through their feelings. Some of them have traveled previously, but for some this is the first time they will be outside of Israel. Please be sensitive to the issues that arise from this. At times, you are a cultural advisor who will need to explain behaviours that seem odd. The intertwining of differences and bonding based upon what we share, is what living bridges are all about!

Your shinshin may go through periods of worry about not being in Israel while their family and or friends are serving in the army. This can be especially difficult during periods of tension in the region. Check out news websites like Ynet, Jerusalem Post, Federation or the Makom website so you can stay current on what is happening in Israel. Just as you would with your own teen, please reach out and engage in conversation. However hard it is for a North American teen to talk about feelings, imagine that magnified by the limitations of trying to express yourself in a foreign language. Remember that speaking in English is stressful and exhausting at first. Don't be surprised if they choose to go to sleep early in the beginning. Please help your own children understand this, and their need for privacy and rest. Host parents have commented that it often takes some time for things to jell. Hosting takes work, but the rewards are ample!

Drugs and Alcohol

The Shinshinim Program does not tolerate illegal drug or alcohol use. All shinshinim have provided written and verbal assurance that they should expect to be sent home should this be a problem.



Security Considerations

Because they are Israelis volunteering in a public and communal role, the Shinshinim received a security briefing for preventive behavior from the Chief Security Officer of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem on the eve of their departure. The Jewish Agency Security Office in NY, together with the host families, community Shlichah, UJA Federation, and the Shinshinim themselves, carry and share the responsibility for their security and well-being while in the U.S.

Host families may be required to meet with the security officer overseeing program to review guidelines and emergency procedures. The security officer will check in with the Shinshin approximately every 2 weeks, send them security emails and meet with them at periodically. Emergency contact information will be provided to host families.

The main security guidelines for the Shinshinim are:

1. The Shinshin needs to be aware of security and safety threats.
2. The Shinshin needs to obey and respect the local law.
3. The Shinshin must update the security office in case he/she plans to leave town overnight and in case there is a residence address change.
4. The Shinshin is not allowed to participate in any unauthorized rallies, demonstrations, marches, gatherings of political nature, unless the permission is granted in advance by the Jewish Agency Chief Security Officer in Israel. Requests for permission are made through North American Security Office,
5. The Shinshin is not allowed to participate in activities that involve bonfires in forests and parks



Thank You

Again, Thank you!” for taking time and considering being a host family to a Shinshin.

Host families play a vital role in the success of the Shinshinim Program. Host parents and siblings are supportive guides in helping the shinshin navigate the transition to living and working in our community.

Many of the shinshinim have indicated that their host families were the highlight of their experience. Many host families say that hosting a Shinshin is a highlight for their family and for their relationship with Israel. They not only feel they have gained a new family member in their Shinshin but also feel they have gained a whole new Israeli family as well! If you are selected to host you will be asked for your thoughts and reflections on the experience. Host families provide important insights and your input will be greatly appreciated.

The community Shlichah and the staff of the Westchester Jewish Council are always available to help.

