



**KIDSAVE**  
**SUMMER**  
**MIRACLES**

**HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK**

Dear Host Family,

Welcome aboard! We are so pleased that you have chosen to participate in Kidsave's "Summer Miracles" Program which puts a personal face on the many overlooked and forgotten older children growing up in orphanages and foster care. Older children, currently living in foreign orphanages and foster care, are brought to the U.S. to stay with host families to experience family life in America, enjoy a cultural and educational experience, attend summer camp, and find a permanent family or lifelong connection.

This Host Family Handbook will function as a reference guide to help you know what to expect and what is expected of you as a host family. It also provides you with a wealth of information to help you prepare for the arrival of your guest, and to keep you informed of the resources available to you along the way.

Your participation in this program will provide a child (or children) with the opportunity to experience family life. "I want to host a child from a foreign orphanage," is a relatively simple statement. In reality, it takes a monumental amount of time, effort, and commitment from many people, you included, to actually make it happen. Kidsave, in partnership with your family and your local Summer Miracles community, will organize and fund this unique summer program. It is a tremendous team effort!

Kidsave has organized communities across the country to bring children over to the U.S. so they can have this opportunity to experience family life and participate in cultural activities during the summer. Each community has its own Community Coordinator(s). The local Coordinator and the organizing committee work to raise funds, recruit host families, and implement the Kidsave program on the local level. Kidsave staff, your local agency partner, volunteers and your Community Coordinator(s) all work together to support you during your hosting experience. The primary role of all involved will be to advocate for these children to help each one find a permanent family.

Some host families may ultimately choose to adopt their host child. Please understand that Kidsave is **not** an adoption agency but is instead a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization working to find families for older children growing up in orphanages and foster care. If you decide to adopt your host child, Kidsave will provide you with information for partnering agencies that are licensed to work in your child's country to assist you in the international adoption process. We look forward to working with you this summer. We thank you for your commitment and know that after it is all over, your participation in the Summer Miracles program will be one of the most unique and meaningful experiences of your life.



Lauren Reicher Gordon  
Vice President, Director Family Visit  
Programs



## Table of Contents

### **Introduction - page 5**

### **What Must Happen to Make the Local Program a Success? - page 6**

- Building a local Summer Miracles Community
- The Importance of Fundraising
- Recruit Enough Families

### **Hosting Facts & Requirements - page 7**

- Kidsave is not an Adoption Agency
- Eligibility - Who Can Host?
- Your Role as an Advocate

### **Process for Host Family Requirements – page 10**

- Application Packet documents
- Financial Requirements
- Your Commitment
- Training
- Host Family Home

### **Things you should know about the children – page 12**

- Identification of Host Children
- Matching
- What the Children Are Told
- Confidentiality

### **Things you should know about Chaperones - page 13**

### **Summer Miracles Host Application Process - page 15**

### **Preparation - Before the Child Arrives - page 16**

- Camp
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Creating a “Welcome” Backpack for Your Child
- Skype Call

### **During the Child’s Visit - page 17**

- Arrival
- Bedtime Rituals
- Pocket Parties
- Support Sessions
- Translator

Visiting Families  
Weekday/Weekend Events  
Weekly Reports/Photos and Videos  
Departure - At the End of the Summer Visit  
Host and Visiting Families Making Adoption Decisions

### **Important Things to Know about the Program - page 22**

Clothes and Personal Belongings  
Food  
Conflict  
Disclosure, Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse  
Grievances  
Holding a Child  
Hospitality, Meals and Customs  
Host Family Emergency and Safe Houses  
Legal Availability of Your Child  
Medical Insurance, Appointments and Evaluations  
Motion Sickness  
Moving Children  
Overnights  
Other People Caring for Your Host Child Transporting  
Your Child  
Vacation Policy  
Debriefing/ Host Family Evaluation

### **Summer Miracles Team - page 30**

Host Family  
Local Summer Miracles Community

- Community Coordinator
- Planning Committee
- Social Worker/Local Agency Partner

#### **National Support**

- Vice President/Director of Family Visit Programs
- Program Intern, Summer and Winter Miracles Program
- Co-Founders

### **Resources Provided - page 33**



## Introduction

Globally an estimated 2-8 million children are in orphanages. Kidsave's mission is to ensure that no orphan or foster child is forgotten and that every child grows up in a family with love and hope for a successful future. Kidsave's Summer Miracles Program is dedicated to (1) providing children growing up in orphanages and foster care with the opportunity to experience family life, (2) exposing the children to families who might be interested in adoption, and (3) building awareness of older children in need of families. We have found as a result of coming to America and participating in the program, many children have met adoptive families. Over 80% of all participants are now in permanent families or in the process of being adopted.

### Why the Program Works

- Families have the opportunity to meet and get to know these children.
- Many fall in love with the child and ultimately choose to adopt the child or act as an advocate for the child and introduce them to others that may be interested in adoption.
- Families who meet these children understand the miracle that occurs when a child receives the parental love he or she has been denied.
- Others hear about the children, creating greater awareness and interest and help get additional kids out of orphanages and foster care and into families.
- A dedicated group of volunteers works very hard to expose the children to a large number of people in the community.

That's why we are depending on you. You are one of many people who have shown an interest in helping to create a Summer Miracles program in your community and opening your home and your heart to a forgotten child for the summer. It's a lot of work, but will probably rank up there as one of the most rewarding and important things you ever do.

*"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was,  
or the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove –  
but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."*

### Why the Program is Important

First, it allows children to experience family life in a safe, healthy environment, which is something they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. Secondly, it provides an opportunity for individuals to meet children they so often read about but never meet. One of our goals is to help people become more aware of children without families by having them become advocates for the Summer Miracles children. These advocacy efforts are often extended to the friends these children leave behind. And thirdly, the Summer Miracles program allows for the creation of a connection between each child and a family.

We're so glad you are willing to help us. Let's make miracles!



## What Must Happen to Make the Local Program a Success?

### Building A Local Summer Miracles Community

The foundation of Kidsave's Summer Miracles Programs are the local volunteers who provide their time, talent and energy to raise the funds necessary to bring children to their community, who help recruit host families and advocate for visiting children and who help insure program sustainability.

Each community is coordinated by a local planning committee comprised of individuals who have an interest in supporting the local program in a variety of ways. Volunteers are needed who have interest in working in one or more of the following areas:

- Fundraising
- Recruitment
  - o Media & communications outreach
  - o Recruiting Host Families
- Community Resources
  - o Identifying camps for children
  - o Identifying healthcare professionals
  - o Identifying translators and managing chaperone activities
- Events
  - o Planning and organizing weekend events

There is something everyone can do no matter how much time they are able to commit. We encourage you to get involved and share these volunteer opportunities with others in your personal network. You can put them in touch with the local community coordinator.

### The Importance of Fundraising

**Fundraising is one of the highest priorities for you and your community! Host families and community volunteers must raise at least \$25,000 per community in order to bring children to the local community.** Each Summer Miracles community has a goal to bring 7 to 10 children for a summer visit. It costs approximately \$8,000 per child to identify the children in-country, arrange for chaperones, obtain medical information and travel documents and cover the cost of travel to bring the children and their chaperones to the US. This cost also includes program management and advocacy efforts for all children including those that Kidsave continues to advocate for post-program.

As a host family, you are responsible for paying a non-refundable \$275 application payment. Additionally, there is a \$1,250 hosting payment for families living in a Summer Miracles hosting community or a \$2,500 hosting payment for families not living in a Summer Miracles hosting community. Host families are also expected to work with the community committee to raise the required funds for the local program, however, host families will not be asked to financially contribute more than the aforementioned fees and payments. Please talk with your community coordinator to discuss how you can help.

Kidsave staff is available to help you and your community with your efforts to raise the necessary funds. Kidsave provides your Community Coordinator with fundraising tools with instructions on how to organize various fundraising events.

In the event that sufficient funds are not raised in the community, the children **will not** be able to travel to your area. Host families can choose to cover the shortfall necessary to bring kids to the community.

### **Enough Families to Bring 7-10 Children**

It is recommended that the community consist of enough families to host the minimum number of recommended kids. It is important that families assist their community coordinator and volunteers by reaching out to community organizations, colleagues, and their personal network to help secure enough families.

\*Please note that the Winter Hosting program does **not** have a minimum recommendation of children per community.

## **Hosting Facts & Requirements**

### **Kidsave is not an Adoption Agency**

Kidsave is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization who works to create change so older forgotten orphanage and foster kids grow up in families and connected to caring adults. Kidsave can refer families who are interested in adoption to partner agencies who are Hague approved and licensed to complete adoptions in the children's country of origin.

### **Eligibility - Who Can Host?**

Kidsave will be bringing children from the country of Colombia for this Summer Miracles program. Our policies for host family selection are bound by country protocols.

- Minimum age to host = 25 years old
- Maximum age to host = none
- Maximum age to adopt = no more than 45 years older than child (Note: Colombia can be flexible, depends on mental and physical health)
- Married couples, single men or women, LGBT families
- Those who have fulfilled all hosting requirements and have been approved to host

Individuals whose circumstances include the following may not be eligible to host:

- History of drug or alcohol abuse/DUI
- Criminal history
- History of domestic violence
- Perpetrator of child abuse or neglect
- Psychiatric Hospitalization/suicidal history, and/or use of Psychotropic medication
- Current cohabitation (i.e. not married)
- Past disrupted adoption
- Past denial by home study agency
- Any current health conditions that could impact your ability to host

If you have questions regarding your eligibility as a host family and wish to confidentially discuss your circumstances, feel free to contact the director of the program.

Note: Whether or not a family assessment or full home study is required is dependent upon the state regulations governing the hosting program in your area. Those families with a current home study must have their social worker complete the Family Psychosocial Study.

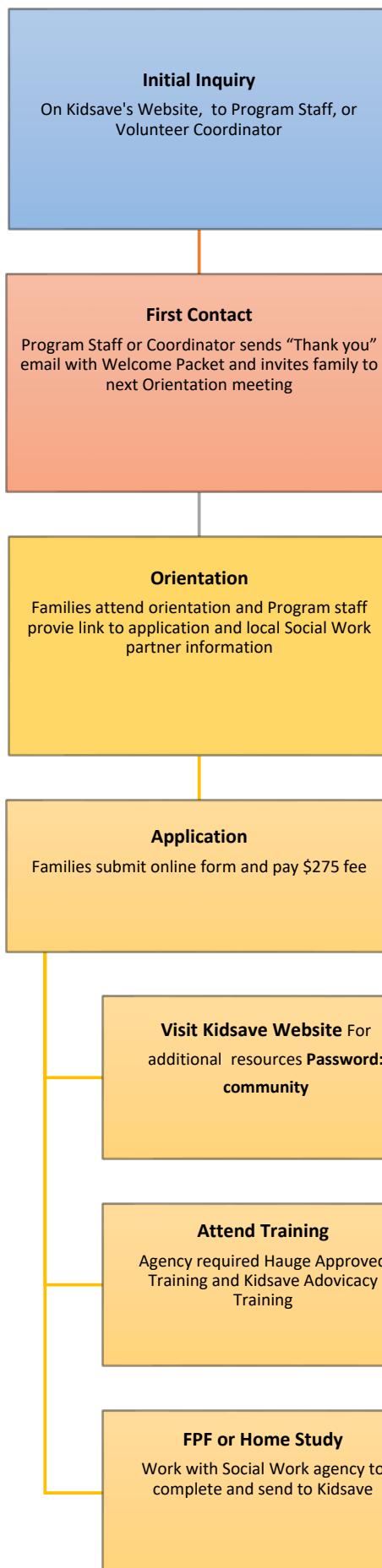
### **Your Role as an Advocate**

Your primary and most vital role in the Summer Miracles program is as an advocate for your host child with the goal of finding him/her a permanent family. The opportunity to live in a family for four to five weeks and to be introduced to individuals who may become interested in adoption is a once in a lifetime experience for these children. This means that you and your community will create opportunities for your child to meet as many potential families as possible throughout their stay. Not to worry, there are guidelines for structuring and arranging visits.

It is not our intention to traumatize and confuse the children or turn your lives upside down, but it *is* our intention to introduce the children to as many prospective families as possible. Many of our host families participate in the program with the hope and expectation of meeting a child and moving on to adoption. You may find, in the midst of your hosting experience that adopting the older child is not for you. Or perhaps, your particular host child is not right for your family or their needs are greater than you feel you can manage. Please keep in mind that through the efforts you and your community have made to bring the children to your community, and in opening your home and family to host, you have already given them a monumental gift. If it is not meant to be for your family, then remain focused on advocating for your host child by providing them with opportunities to meet other potential families. Let that be another gift - and your most critical obligation during the program.

There will be no pressure to adopt, but there will be pressure to focus your attention on your host child's needs, and be open to supporting and participating in advocating for their future even as you continue to consider adoption yourselves. The role of the Community Coordinator and Kidsave staff will be to keep the momentum going and ensure that advocating for each child is a priority. You will have the efforts and support of the national offices of Kidsave, your local team and volunteers to help organize and facilitate the advocacy efforts. Difficult as this may be in the emotional "thick of things", please remember that the children's time here is limited and that the goal is to find each child a permanent family. Advocacy Tools are provided by your Community Coordinator.







## Process for Host Family Requirements

### Application Packet

The following is a list of documents required to host, for you to complete and submit online or directly to Kidsave program staff or your local community coordinator.

- Application to Host
- Host Family Agreement
- Family Psychosocial Study (include child abuse and criminal clearances). Some states require a full home study.
- Family Photographs
- Dear Child Letter \*
- Release Form to Use Likeness \*
- Confidentiality Agreement \*
- Copy of Driver's License or Passport (for each person hosting)
- Copy of Proof of Auto Insurance (for each person hosting)
- Authorization for Disclosure and Reciprocal Exchange of Information \*
- Client's Rights \*
- Hague training certificates of completion (Colombia requires a minimum of 10 hours)
- Post program ICBF evaluation and chaperone evaluation

\*Indicates that the Form can be found on the online resource page for host families.

### Financial Requirements

As a host family you will be responsible for:

- Non-refundable Kidsave application payment of \$275
- Kidsave hosting payment of \$1,250 if in a Summer Miracles hosting community or \$2,500 if not in a Summer Miracles hosting community.
- Local social work agency fee - includes costs for completion of Family Psychosocial Study or home study ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 (depending upon the agency and/or state requirements for a single visit vs. a full home study), training costs and program support.
- Cost of child abuse and criminal clearances (needed for all persons above the age of 18 residing in your home) – check with Agency for requirements

**All Host Families must submit the \$275 application payment and \$1,250 program payment.**

- Payments can be submitted online at:
  - Application Payment:  
<https://app.etapestry.com/cart/KidsaveInternational/cart2/index.php>.
  - Hosting Payment:  
<https://app.etapestry.com/cart/KidsaveInternational/default/category.php?ref=3597.0.98785301>
- OR Fees can be mailed to the Kidsave lockbox at Kidsave International, PO Box 39293, Los Angeles, CA 90039-0293

## **Your Commitment**

As a host family, you will sign and submit a copy of the Host Family Agreement which indicates your agreement to participate in the Summer Miracles program and adhere to all program guidelines. This document is located in the Host Family Resource section of the Kidsave website. If you need clarification or have any questions regarding any of the terms, do not hesitate to contact your Community Coordinator or Kidsave staff. Your Community Coordinator will go through the agreement during training and will address any questions you might have. We thank you for your commitment and participation and look forward to a wonderful summer together.

## **Training**

Hosting a child is an incredibly rewarding experience. It can also be difficult and challenging and requires a great deal of commitment, energy and understanding. Your time together is too long to simply “manage” and too short to become an “official” parent, but parent you must. They will not simply be “guests” and will travel to you with their history and struggles in their suitcase.

The most important part of your job as host family and parent for the summer will be to provide a safe, structured and nurturing home for your host child. If you know some of the typical challenges and behaviors to expect, you will be better equipped to handle them and feel a greater sense of control, giving you time to enjoy the experience and have some fun.

To be best prepared for the hosting experience, all participating families are required to complete host family training directed by your coordinator, local social worker and/or program coordinator. The overall time commitment for the required training is approximately 14 hours. This includes your agency training requirement and Kidsave program and advocacy training. Training hours vary based on agency requirements.

In training, families will learn what to expect from the hosting experience and will gain access to a variety of resources to support their role as a host family. Kidsave’s local agency partner facilitates Hague approved training. Training may be in-person, online, or a combination. The Kidsave program and advocacy training may be facilitated in two sessions prior to the children’s arrival by the local coordinator. If married, it is mandatory that you both complete the required training. It is not unusual for one to be more interested in the idea of hosting a child or provide the momentum for participation, but it is important that both of you are equally invested in committing to the program and your child, and are informed and prepared to host.

## **Host Family Home**

The local social worker will make the final determination as to whether or not a family’s home is adequate for the number of children or sex of a child they are interested in hosting. The Community Coordinator can assist in fielding initial questions, however. Here are some of the considerations:

- We must always be aware of the potential of a history of sexual and/or physical abuse
- Sleeping and supervision arrangements must be made accordingly
  - If rooms are shared with host family’s children, then they must be of the same sex and similar age
  - Older hosted children should never be left unsupervised with younger children and/or the family pet
  - Host families must consider the host child a stranger in their home and provide supervision accordingly

- Even if they are biological siblings, a boy and girl host child should not sleep in the same bed
- A family must have adequate physical space to host a child or children.
- The accommodations must be adequate and appropriate
- Host families must be cognizant of safety issues and plan accordingly
- Host family homes and hygiene must reflect care and concern for the health and safety of children

## **Things you should know about the Children**

### Identification of Host Children

Children are selected based on age, legal availability for adoption, academic level, and recommendations by the children's professional team of which children have the potential to succeed in the program. Despite best efforts, it is impossible to predict how a child will cope in the absence of everything familiar-language, culture, caretakers, setting, food and climate. Some children do exceptionally well immediately, some after a brief adjustment period, some hit the ground running and thrive on the adventure; a rare few may struggle the entire trip and require a great deal of time and attention from host parents, community resources and Kidsave staff; the rest fall somewhere in the middle. Kidsave staff, the children's chaperone, your local social worker and Community Coordinator will be available to support and help you with any of the adjustment issues and challenges.

### Matching

Although we try to honor the host family's child preference, the reality is we are looking for families for children, not children for families. Having said that, we will do the best we can to honor your request. Please try to be flexible and know that there are some program limitations. Matches will be made by the local social worker in your community, along with the input from your local coordinator and Kidsave staff. Some points for you to consider regarding the matching process:

- Children are referred by the child welfare agency as individuals who would benefit from a "visit" program
- Boys, girls, as well as sibling sets are identified for program participation
- If there are space or family constellation issues (i.e. limitations in physical space, do not want to change birth order of children in your home) or limitations noted in the Family Psychosocial Study, the matches will be made accordingly
- Matching a group of children to a community will be made in an effort to accommodate as many families and child preferences as is feasible
- Family and child matching assignments are based on child preference and social worker recommendations
- Photos and information on the children is sent to the local social work partner or to the family's social worker (if family is not working with local partner). Social workers review the information and determine the most appropriate match for each child. The social worker discusses the possible match with the host family and provides the family with the child's assessment for review. The social worker informs Kidsave if the family has agreed to the match. Kidsave informs the local community coordinator.
- Host families must have completed their Family Psychosocial Study and their criminal check and child abuse clearance before they are matched with a child.

- We are focusing on finding families for children rather than children for families, so we are hoping our host families can be as flexible as possible to allow as many children as possible to participate

### **What the Children Are Told**

The children are told they are coming for summer vacation to stay with a family and attend day camp with American children. Children are also told they may meet someone who will want to stay in contact with them and be a connection when they return to their home country, or that they may meet someone who will want to adopt them.

We realize that some of the children have friends who have been adopted after they participated in Summer Miracles, so these children may anticipate that this will happen for them as well. We ask that adoption not be discussed with the children. Discussing adoption with the child during the Summer Miracles visit can result in problems and delays with foreign governments. Families are asked to review — “Talk About Adoption, Not!” located in the online community resource section, to have a better understanding on this topic.

Regardless of what the children are told, many long for a family and hope that their host family will adopt them. A child may ask you about adoption. If this happens, **families are not to discuss the topic of adoption with the child.** Families who are having difficulty with this should contact their local social worker or Kidsave.

### **Confidentiality**

Maintaining the confidentiality of our program participants is our commitment. Kidsave draws from the rich resources of communities where families may participate in the program with their friends, neighbors, members of their church or synagogue, or sports or service organization. We recognize the obligation to maintain your right to privacy and confidentiality, as well as confidentiality for the children in the program. It is for this reason that we require host families, staff, interns and volunteers to sign a confidentiality agreement. There is a great deal of personal information that families are informed about the child they are hosting. All Hosts are asked to maintain the privacy of the child in regards to personal details about the child’s history, biological family, and their place of residence.

### **Things you should know about Chaperones**

Chaperones, usually social workers, psychologists or regional officials, will accompany the children to your city. The chaperones who accompany the children are here to ensure their safety and to monitor the program. One of their responsibilities is to ensure that the children have a positive experience, and the chaperone will observe the children in each host family’s home and at weekend events. Their experience in your home and community will be their perception of American family life. Additionally, chaperones are responsible for submitting two reports about the children and their Host families (one at two weeks into the program and the other at the conclusion). Training will devote time to discuss how you can welcome your chaperone.

## Chaperone Facts

- Chaperones are the children's legal guardians during the summer program. Therefore, they will stay in your area and will need to **stay in your house for approximately one week**
- Chaperone schedules will be arranged prior to their arrival, but exceptions may occur in response to the children's needs
- The chaperones will speak little or no English
- The chaperone must see each child on a weekly basis (i.e., at weekend events, weekday events, camp or at the host family's home)
- The chaperone may wish to stay with the families who are hosting the youngest children for the first few days to ease the adjustment of the child to his/her new environment
- The chaperone may need to spend extra time with families who host children if they are having difficulty adapting; the chaperones can be invaluable in facilitating the transition
- The chaperone may be interested in accompanying the children to camp or other scheduled enrichment activities
- The chaperone must authorize any elective evaluations, assessments and examinations (i.e. medical, dental, etc.)
- The chaperone has the final say over family appropriateness. Kidsave must defer to the chaperone's decision if there is a dispute over family appropriateness
- If the community can recruit a bilingual Host family for the chaperone he or she can stay with the bilingual Host during the visit as a "home base"
- The chaperone's time with a host family will have an impact on the family routine. You may find that the family dynamic changes with the host child deferring more to the chaperone than the host. Do not be alarmed, this is normal. Chaperones should redirect the children to defer to the host family while the chaperone plays a supporting role. Still, the children will have developed close bonds with the chaperone prior to travel so host families should be aware that family dynamics will change during the time the chaperone is in the host family's home.

Kidsave provides each chaperone with:

1. A cell phone to use for domestic phone calls
2. The same emergency medical coverage as the children. Kidsave assumes responsibility for the deductible and co-pay
3. A stipend for their daily expenses in the United States

Just before or just after the children return to their home country, a debriefing meeting will be held with the chaperones to find out what they liked, didn't like and how the program can be improved. It has been our experience that families are often reticent to have their child's chaperone stay in their home or have an extended visit with the family. Many seem to fear this will inhibit bonding or see the chaperone as a burden. It is important for families to understand that after the children return these chaperones will report back on the program, become the communication liaison for the family and children, and often are the family's and child's advocate for those who do decide to adopt. Care should be taken to ensure that chaperones are made to feel comfortable, welcome and respected during their stay. Treat them as a guest and find ways to make sure that they experience American hospitality.

## Summer Miracles Host Application Process

The following paperwork requirements must be completed for hosting. You can pay the application fee on the Kidsave website [www.kidsave.org](http://www.kidsave.org) or by sending a check to Kidsave at PO Box 39293 Los Angeles, CA 90039-0293. In the memo section please note application fee.



1. Kidsave Summer Miracles Orientation Webinar. All interested prospective Hosts should first attend an orientation. At the meeting, families learn about the background of the program and information on steps to become a host. Link to view calendar: [Webinars](#).



2. Kidsave Host Family Application. The first step to being approved as a host family is to complete and sign the application form. To receive the application, you must submit a \$275 non-refundable application fee. Link: [Host Application Payment](#). Additional materials must be submitted along with your application. See below for a list of other application components.



3. Family Psychosocial Study/Home Study - Hague Accredited Agency. States have different requirements for families to host an orphaned child in their home. Families must follow the guidelines in the state where they reside. If you are not currently working with an agency and will be hosting in an existing Summer Miracles community, Kidsave will refer you to the partner agency in that community. As per ICBF requirements, host families must have their Family Psychosocial Study completed by a Hague Accredited agency.  
Agency List: [Kidsave Local Agency Partners](#).

- All host families need a Family Psychosocial Study completed by your adoption agency social worker. Kidsave will provide your agency with the Family Psychosocial Study form that must be completed. Once received, Kidsave provides the Family Psychosocial Study to the committee in Colombia who reviews and approves host families along with additional documents listed below.
- Some states require a full home study be completed in order for a family to host a child. In these states, families must complete the Family Psychosocial Study (as noted above) as well as complete a full home study through your Hague accredited adoption agency.
- You will be required to have criminal and child abuse clearances (FBI fingerprinting is required) completed for all persons over the age of 18 who are living in your home. Directions on how to obtain this will be provided by your local home study agency. If you plan on having babysitters or relatives care for your host child(ren), please be aware that all persons caring for your host child(ren) unsupervised by you must also have a current child abuse and criminal check completed. They also must have a face to face interview with the local licensed social work partner. If your host child will be cared for in another person's home, that person will need a criminal check, child abuse clearance, and home visit by the local licensed social worker partner in their home.

- For families living outside of a hosting community they will be responsible for selecting a caregiver that will be available during the four or five week hosting program in case of an emergency. This caregiver must have a current child abuse and criminal check completed. They also must have a face to face interview with the host family's local licensed social work partner who must complete and submit a report to Kidsave at the host's expense. This will allow the caregiver to drive the host child and care for the host child *in the host family's home*.



- 4. Host Family Resources.** Go to Community Tools and review the Host Family Handbook and other resources. A link to this page and the password will be sent when your application is received.



- 5. Training.** Host will complete two sets of training. They will first complete the training required by their local home study agency. The number of hours and format of this training varies by agency. Then host families will complete Kidsave's Program and Advocacy Training. Dates for this training will be provided by your local community coordinator or the Kidsave Program Coordinator.



- 6. Make your Hosting Payment.** \$1,250 for families living in a hosting community, \$2,500 for families living outside of a hosting community are due no later than the paperwork deadline.

Link: [Hosting Payment](#). Scholarships requests must also be submitted by the paperwork deadline. To request scholarship application information, contact the Summer Miracles Program Staff.

## Preparation - Before the Child Arrives

### Camp

Research camps for your host child to attend. Speak with the Camp Director to learn if there are counselors that are bi-lingual. Your host child will adjust more quickly if there is a counselor who they can communicate with. The cost of the camp is the responsibility of the host family. Many communities are able to obtain reduced tuition or scholarships from their local camps. The goal of the camp experience is to give your host child the opportunity to interact with other American children, have some fun and learn something about our country and culture. Going to camp can be very frightening initially for your host child. Use a translator to prepare your child for their camp experience and reassure them you will be coming back to get them if you do not speak Spanish. We recommend that you go with your child the first couple of days of camp or have them attend for just a few hours to start. It's important that the child is comfortable in the camp environment. It is also important that you feel comfortable with the camp your child will attend and that the camp is prepared for him or her and will be sensitive to their need for time to adjust and provide reassurance. Don't forget to provide the camp with the resource guide, "Child Spanish Talk," 1,000 of the most commonly used words in English and Spanish, provided by your community coordinator.

**Working hosts.** For hosts who work throughout the day, camp is an approved form of childcare that allows the children to have fun and release energy throughout the day. ICBF guidelines state that the host children cannot attend camp for the full duration of the program. Working hosts



need to take time off from work (a minimum of one week, more preferred) during the week to spend time with their host child.

### **Child Proofing Your Home**

Childproof your house as if you are hosting a toddler. While an American 8-year-old child would not run up to your stove and turn on the gas, these children might. They are naturally curious and have not had the experiences of their American counterparts. These children are often developmentally delayed (assume four months for every year of living in an institution) and will behave like younger children. It is up to you to take simple measures to protect your child. Don't be surprised if the kids are drawn to light switches and turn lights on and off, if they fiddle with the volume on the TV or stereo and if they want to dive right into a pool. (NOTE: Do not expect that these children know how to swim. Most do not.) They will quickly learn the boundaries, but you must protect them in the interim.

### **Creating a "Welcome" Backpack for your Child**

We ask that you provide a "Welcome Backpack" for your child. Here is a list of things you can include:

- Water bottle, healthy snack and a book
- One or more laminated photograph(s) of you, your house, your family, and your pets to become part of the photo album you will create together
- "Welcome" letters and pictures from family members
- Disposable camera
- Crayons and coloring book, sticker book, or small toy
- Stuffed animal to cuddle with when they go to bed

Please make sure the backpack is labeled with your child's name, your name and contact information.

### **Skype Call**

You will have the opportunity to have a skype call with your host child one week prior to their arrival while they are in Bogota attending workshops. A translator will be facilitating the call. This is a wonderful way to "break the ice" before meeting. Think about things you might want to share with your host child (i.e. show them their room, introduce them to your pets, etc.)

### **During the Child's Visit**

#### **Arrival**

The day the children arrive is a very exciting day! Most are excited and happy, eager to meet their families and go off to their home for the summer. Some may be exhausted, frightened and overwhelmed and need some coaxing and reassurance before leaving with you. Try not to be discouraged or disappointed in the child who may take more time and patience to settle in and feel secure. This is the perfect time to present your child with their Welcome Backpack. Your coordinator will arrange for snacks and food to be brought to the airport and may try to arrange a meeting room to allow time and opportunity for introductions, instructions and building rapport before the children leave with you. Your local coordinator will match you with a volunteer translator prior to the arrival of the children who will help you to communicate with your host child at the airport arrival and throughout the program. It is a good idea to reach out to your

friends, family and colleagues to identify other people in the community who can assist you with translation if needed.

**For families living outside of a hosting community:** we ask that you stay in the hosting community where your host child arrives for a minimum of 3 days and 2 nights to be near the chaperone and a local coordinator during the initial transition period.

### **Bedtime Rituals**

**Bath time:** Your bathtub may be a novelty — or even terrifying — to your host child. Many children are reluctant to get in, and even more reluctant to get out. In the orphanage or foster home they are not generally given baths in tubs deep enough to really soak in. Your host child may prefer to take a shower. Most of the children are used to bathing with cold water. It may take them a while before they are willing to use warm or hot water. They may be shy at first about being seen without their clothes on. (This is appropriate. After all, you are a stranger to them when you first meet. Generally; they are able to get over this initial reaction with time and trust.) Try and make bath time fun, but insist on supervision. Remember that in some ways these kids are much like toddlers.

**Bed Clothes:** The children will want to wear pajamas. Have one or two stuffed animals for them to sleep with and have a nightlight working in their bedroom. Most children prefer that the bedroom door be left open but some may feel more comfortable with the door closed. Plan on leaving the door open. Make sure to show them the location of the bathroom (the path to the bathroom should remain lit at night), and remind them to go to the toilet before bedtime.

**Sleeping Alone:** If you have other children in your house try and buddy them up in the same room with your visitor, at least for the first few nights. Most of these children have never slept in a room alone, and it is a very frightening prospect. In the orphanage they are used to sharing their room and their bed with several other children. Reassure the child that you will be nearby, and show them where you will be sleeping.

### **Pocket Parties**

Pocket parties are informal events/get-togethers designed to create an opportunity for a family to visit with and get to know a particular child, yet minimize the discomfort and/or expectations that could be prompted by a one-on-one visit. Pocket party gatherings also provide the opportunity to introduce and recruit prospective families for unmatched children.

Pocket Parties:

- Should be organized by the host family or Community Coordinator
- Should include the host family and/or Community Coordinator
- Can include a special friend or friends of the child
- Include the children of the host family and/or the children of the visiting family
- Should include other children whenever possible, up to 5 is appropriate
- Should be centered around a fun activity as a prop to avoid direct focus on the child
- Cannot include personal questions regarding circumstances or history of the child(ren)
- Cannot include any discussion of adoption
- Should not include two families interested in the same child at the same time
- Visiting families cannot bring gifts, the interaction must be centered on the relationship vs. what the children “get”
- If visiting families want to give something, they can provide food, snacks, and/or the projects/entertainment for the small gathering

## Support Sessions

Host families will participate in two mandatory support sessions during the hosting program. The first session usually conducted after the two week mark generally provides a format to address specific concerns or questions regarding behavior management, adjustment and any medical or psychological concerns. It is also a place to talk about the wonderful experiences you are having as a host. The second session is held the week prior to the children's departure and addresses what the families can send home with the children, managing potential adoption questions, issues around saying goodbye, next steps, and staying in touch with your host child/ren. The sessions will be led by the local social work partner and community coordinator. Your community coordinator will provide you with the dates/times of these sessions. The chaperone should be present to address any questions that may arise and/or issues that present. The children will also have two support sessions at the same time as the adults. They will be facilitated by a social worker and/or volunteer translator. For families living outside of a hosting community the support sessions will be available via webinar.

## Translator

Your Community Coordinator will provide you with a list of translators that will be available to assist during the program. If you know of any people in your community that speak the language of your child's country and may be willing to help during the summer, please let your Community Coordinator know. Although we find that language usually isn't an insurmountable problem, it is essential to have a cadre of translators to assist with adjustment, communication, problem solving and providing a language bridge between host family and child and host family and chaperone.

It is normal for a child to be drawn to someone that shares their language but if you feel excluded in the relationship between your host child and a translator or if you have any questions or concerns regarding the translator's role, contact your Community Coordinator for assistance. The translator's primary role is to translate for parent and child to enhance their ability to communicate with one another. We ask that the translators make their role clear to the children and be respectful of boundaries and the relationship between host family and host children. It is not helpful for a translator to build a primary relationship with the host child to the exclusion of the host family. The Community Coordinator will make sure that translators have signed the Confidentiality Agreement and are aware of Kidsave's translator protocols.

For families outside of a hosting community: Host families not living in one of the Kidsave hosting communities must identify at least one on call translator in their community if they do not speak the language.

## Translation Tools

As mentioned, Kidsave provides you with a copy of the Child Spanish Talk phrasebook, located in the Community Support section of the website. Many families have also found that online translation programs are extremely helpful. Here are several recommended by Kidsave host families:

[www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com)  
<http://www.paralink.com/translation>  
<http://www.mezzofanti.org/translation/>  
<http://www.word2word.com/dictionary.html>  
<http://www.tashian.com/multibabel/>

Additionally, you may wish to register for language line, a phone-based, on-demand translation service. There is a charge but there are also plans available. Visit [www.language.com](http://www.language.com) for more information.

### **Visiting Families**

One of the factors contributing to the success of the Summer Miracles program is the role of advocacy in introducing the participating children to as many prospective families as possible during the visit in hopes that they will find a forever family. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for these children and we want to take advantage of the opportunity to introduce them to people who may become ambassadors for that particular child or consider adopting them. That goal must always remain at the forefront of the host family and community efforts but not at the expense of the child. The visiting family protocols are designed to minimize stress and trauma to the child and host family. Some host families will be in the midst of making an adoption decision themselves so may be reluctant to participate. Your Community Coordinator and Kidsave staff will assist and guide all advocacy efforts.

Families interested in meeting the children are always welcome at the Kidsave events. There are two types of “visiting families.” The first group would be those that are simply interested in Kidsave’s mission and attend the event as an opportunity to meet the children, experience the program and put a face to the overlooked and forgotten children growing up in orphanages and foster care. The participation of these families is invaluable as they will inevitably be touched by the children, spread the word and become advocates. Sometimes miracles happen and they, too, find themselves contemplating adoption.

The second group of visiting families will be those interested in adoption and come to the events to meet the children in hopes that they find a child that they may be interested in adopting.

All visiting families must “register” with the Community Coordinator by providing their names and contact information on a sign-in sheet. The Community Coordinator will ensure that the families visiting a Kidsave event do the following:

- Attend a short orientation prior to the event or via webinar
- Complete and submit the Kidsave **Visiting Family Packet**
- Review the **Visiting Family Do’s and Don’ts**

If you provide your Community Coordinator with information that a family is planning to attend an event or if the coordinator learns this via the website or phone call, the coordinator will provide the family with the Visiting Family Packet.

Visiting families may **not** have unsupervised visits with the children. We ask that you keep your Community Coordinator informed of any interest you have regarding your host child as it is in the child’s best interest. These visits must not be arranged without the Community Coordinator’s knowledge.

Though Kidsave values a host family’s opinion about each visiting family spending time with their host child the host family cannot make the determination of which families can and cannot spend time with their host child. Visiting families who are approved to spend time with the children outside of weekend events have been pre-screened by Kidsave staff. Please share any concerns you have regarding a particular visiting family with your Community Coordinator.

Families interested in meeting a particular child have the following options:

- Attending a weekend event
- Attending small gatherings/ “pocket parties” to spend some supervised, more intimate time with a child they are interested in.
- Visiting the host family home where the child feels safe and the visiting family can be introduced as a friend of the host family or someone who is interested in learning more about the program
- Spending time with a child and their host family doing a fun, interactive activity, ideally in the host family’s community, and the visiting family can be introduced as a friend of the host family or someone interested in learning more about the program
  - Please note: though it is ideal for a visiting family to spend time with your host child in your home or your local community this will not always be possible. Time with visiting families may require driving to a community and activity that is agreed upon and deemed reasonable for the host and visiting family

### **Weekday/Weekend Events**

Your local coordinating team may organize and schedule **Weekday Events** designed to increase public awareness and advocate for the children in the community. Host family attendance is welcome but not mandatory. Participation by the children is mandatory. Your community team will arrange transportation or coordinate a carpool.

**Weekend events** are scheduled each weekend during the visit to allow the children to interact with one another, to enable the chaperone to visit with all the kids and to permit visiting families to come meet and interact with the children. **Attendance at weekend events is mandatory.** Families may be excused from one weekend event for special events and/or vacation travel during weekend two only (subject to change).

**For families outside a hosting community:** create a schedule of opportunities to introduce your host children to members of the community.

### **Weekly Reports/Photos and Videos**

We require that families complete a weekly report for each week during the summer program. This form is available on the Kidsave website ([www.kidsave.org](http://www.kidsave.org)) on the Summer Miracles community resources page. These weekly reports keep Kidsave informed on how the child is adapting to your home environment and whether or not you require any additional support and intervention. These reports are also used to help with advocacy efforts. They are used to update advocacy flyers and are shared with visiting families. We also request that you post photos to the Summer Miracles online shared drive on a weekly basis so we can update advocacy flyers and our website. Pictures and videos are extremely helpful in recruiting potential adoptive families. Your coordinator will provide you with the shared drive access information before your host child’s arrival. NOTE: High resolution photos are very important for our advocacy efforts. Whenever possible upload photos taken with a camera rather than a cell phone/tablet.

### **Departure - At the End of the Summer Visit**

Children travel on visas that allow them to enter the USA as tourists. Sending the children back to their orphanage or foster family at the end of the four to five week period is not negotiable. Although sending the children back to the country at the end of the visit is not easy, it is required by law by both the U.S. and the child’s home country for the children to return on the date identified as the end of the program. **The U.S. Embassy has stated that any organization that fails to send back any child from the entire group would be banned from participating in programs such as ours in the future.** Kidsave and families must therefore

comply with this rule so that the Summer Miracles program can continue and more children will have the opportunity to experience family life and find a permanent family. If you have a concern regarding a family's willingness to comply, please let us know. We will step in to explain the law and the risk to the families and program if there is non-compliance.

Sometimes families assume that Kidsave has the influence and power to orchestrate a change in the laws to allow the children to remain in the U.S. to be adopted. We do not make the laws, we follow them. Adoption of the participating children can only be accomplished through the formal process required by our country and the sending country. There are no short cuts. That having been said, we realize it is difficult to say goodbye, but say goodbye you must. The local social worker will facilitate a support session prior to the departure date to help you with ways to manage your goodbye and your local coordinator will provide you with protocols on how you can remain in touch, and next steps if you make the decision to adopt. You are also welcome to speak with the program director.

### **Host and Visiting Families Making Adoption Decisions**

Families are not required to make their decision during the program. They are given two weeks post program to make an informed decision.

The Community Coordinator will encourage families to consult with the local social worker at any time to discuss making their adoption decision. Families are asked to read the article, "**Guidelines to Making an Adoption Decision**" which will be provided by your Community Coordinator.

If families are yet undecided at the end of two weeks, they will be contacted by the program director and will be advised if there is another interested family who will be considered by the child's social worker for adoption.

The child's needs are the primary consideration in matching the child with a family. If a family's skills and resources are determined not to meet the child's needs, they may be bypassed and the next family on the list considered. This will be determined by and communicated to the family by the sending country.

Kidsave will advocate for any child whose placement falls through. When there is not another family on the list efforts will be made to recruit an appropriate family and/or the host family will be asked to consider in-country support for the child.

### **Important Things to Know about the Program**

#### **Clothes and Personal Belongings**

You can expect the children to arrive with a small bag or suitcase containing clothing. Some may be too big or too small. NOTE: Do not throw these clothes away, no matter how old, worn or ill-fitting they may seem. The chaperone is responsible for bringing these clothes back with the children, regardless of their condition.

**Basic Wardrobe** – Families will be asked to provide basic clothing needs for the child they host. Often friends or family have clothing they are happy to pass down. Let your friends and your church or synagogue know you need used clothing and you will usually find many offers. Do not

feel an obligation to buy the child an entire new wardrobe. If you need to buy clothing or shoes please keep it to a minimum.

**Size** – Children are likely to be smaller than their American counterparts of the same age. It is best to wait before buying much clothing until you see what size your visitor needs.

**Less is more** – Upon arrival the children will likely be overwhelmed by having too many clothing choices and by rooms that are overflowing with toys. You may want to consider keeping toys in another area of the house and offering daily clothing choices.

**Personal Property** – Many of these children have little or no concept of personal property. They are accustomed to sharing everything, including their clothing. Do not be surprised or offended if you see the prized outfit you purchased for your visitor on another child's body. Also the children might worry about their things getting stolen, so caution other siblings in the house not to take anything from your host child without asking. The children also have been known to pilfer through other people's property. In some cases this meant that children have gone through their family's pockets, drawers, and cabinets. Just be patient with the child and communicate with them that they need to ask before investigating other people's things. Be sure you put away anything that you or your children would prefer to keep "off limits" to your host child.

**Style Differences** – "Style" of dress may be different than here so please be understanding of individual preferences.

**Swim Attire** – Don't be surprised if your visitor strips down into underwear and jumps in the pool or takes a suit off in front of a crowd of people. Please outline appropriate pool behavior with your host child at the BEGINNING of any pool activities. See if you can borrow a bathing suit for your host child and have it in your home before the child arrives.

**Shoes** – Shoes are usually the first thing these children need when they get here. Those sent with the child are likely to be too small or too big and may not be appropriate for the activities during their stay. Most children are not sent with tennis shoes. You may have to purchase a pair of tennis shoes for your host child to wear to day camp.

**Bedwetting** – Common in children in unfamiliar surroundings. An accident may cause embarrassment (some even try to hide). It is a good idea to plan ahead and put a plastic mattress pad on the bed the child will sleep in and have some extra sets of sheets on hand.

**Toiletries and Hygiene** – When purchasing personal items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, and shampoo, stick with the basics, at least initially. You may want to have an over the counter lice treatment on hand as some of the children may have head lice. Continue to check for head lice up to two weeks after the children arrive. We recommend that everyone in your family use their own brush or comb. Be aware that many of these kids are not used to baths or bathing with warm water. It might be helpful if you were able to have a same sex parent explain/teach bathing to your child for the first few days they are here. Depending on the age of the child you may need to have products in the event that your host child has a menstrual cycle during the visit.

### **Food**

**Gorging** – don't be surprised if your visitor wants to eat and eat and eat. Remember, this child may not be sure there will ever be another meal as big as the one you put out on the first day. But use good judgment. These little people have little stomachs and the abundance of food, especially early on, may make your visitor ill if he or she is allowed to eat without limits. It is OK and expected

for you to set limits on intake. Likewise we ask you to limit junk food and soda. Given the choice, most children would opt for candy versus fruit; or Coke instead of juice, but use your judgment to provide healthy choices.

**Hoarding** – along the same vein as gorging, host families have reported many examples of hoarding, like finding uncooked eggs under pillows, or rotted fruit in sock drawers. It will take some time for the child to understand that “there is more food where that came from” and not to feel the need to hoard for leaner times. The children who visit are often great fans of fresh fruit and vegetables. Bananas are a particular favorite. Exercise caution with fruits, though, until you are certain the child is not allergic to anything. In general it is a good idea to keep a steady supply (such as a large bowl) of fruit available for snacking. Host parents should be especially careful about bananas, which are high in potassium. Since the children’s diets are low in potassium, gorging on bananas could have adverse health effects (including heart problems). A few bananas at a time should be fine, but prevent gorging by keeping bananas out of reach and supervising their consumption

**Dry/cold cereal with milk** – is not so familiar to these children. They will recognize Cream of Wheat or grits or oatmeal (hot cereal in general) and will usually eat a hard-boiled egg. Fried food is less common in the diet of the institutionalized child and too much fried food – such as the typical “kids’ meal” of chicken fingers and French fries served at local fast food restaurants – can wreak havoc with their little systems. When possible, offer foods that are not fried, mashed potatoes, rather than fries, etc. South American breakfasts usually include eggs, bread and fruit.

**Beverages** – The children are also unaccustomed to drinking carbonated beverages. Even if you do not share the belief that children should not drink soda, exercise some caution because the children may be unused to ice-cold beverages, which could cause anxiety and stomachache. Juice that is served from the refrigerator is generally not too cold. The children are used to being served various types of fruit juice and this is a good alternative to soda. They will expect the tea to be heavily sweetened and not too hot. In Colombia, it is common for children to have hot chocolate, especially in the morning. Sweets and ice cream need no translation. They are a universal favorite. Use good judgment and don’t leave too much junk food around as it will quickly disappear into little tummies that are sure to complain later. Most of the children we have met and seen are just as easily satisfied with healthful snacks, so take advantage of this while you still can! Some good snack foods to have on hand include:

- Yogurt
- Trail mix
- Dried fruit and fresh fruit
- Cheese/Crackers/Juice/milk

#### **Recipe Ideas:**

Colombian: Ajiaco - Place 2 shredded chicken breasts, 6 peeled potatoes (including rose and red potatoes), and 3 chunks of corn into a pot, fill the pot with water, add salt and cover the pot. Leave everything cooking on medium until the chicken and potatoes cook through and the water is dense.

Colombian Beans and Plantains -The day before cooking, leave pinto beans in water. The next day, clean the pinto beans and put them in a pressure cooker with water and chunks of green plantains.



## **Conflict**

The Summer Miracles program is an extremely emotional and rewarding experience. The rules and protocols are designed to provide structure and safety to the experience. It is a program that involves passion and children, and sometimes differences of opinion or disagreements will occur. If you find yourself in the midst of a conflict that you do not know how to handle or could potentially damage your relationship with a friend, neighbor, community member or leader, please turn it over to us and let us intervene.

## **Disclosure, Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse**

Kidsave volunteers and hosts must follow the following procedures to report disclosure, suspicions or allegations of child abuse.

In the case of disclosure, suspicions or allegations of child abuse regarding a host child immediately contact the local volunteer coordinator and the Kidsave Summer Miracles Director, who will be the child's chaperone/guardian, who determines the action to be taken and reports to Colombia's Instituto Colombiano Bienestar Familiar (ICBF). The Kidsave District of Columbia office is a licensed child placing agency and is therefore, a mandated reporter. In the case of children visiting in the District of Columbia, the procedure also includes advising Kidsave's President, a mandated reporter, who will report to the District Hotline at **(202) 671-SAFE** or **(202) 671-7233**.

## **Grievances**

We do our best to respond to the needs of our communities, our staff, our families and our volunteers but there are times when you or someone in your community may have an issue with us or feel that our efforts have fallen short in some way. Please direct your grievances to our attention so we can problem solve together and identify a solution or address a grievance to come to a resolution. Discussing your grievances with community members and families or disparaging the organization will create a tone of negativity and distrust in your Summer Miracles community. Ultimately, it will impact the children and families. Please follow our grievance procedure outlined below. We want to address your concerns and will make every effort to resolve them.

### **Grievance Procedure**

In the event a person or persons participating in a Kidsave program has a grievance regarding a decision, the program, a staff member, volunteer or participant, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The client will request a conference with the Director of the Family Visit Programs, Lauren Reicher-Gordon. A conference shall be held with the client within two weeks of the request and those involved in the grievance may or may not be present.
2. A written notice of action will be completed within two weeks of the meeting and sent to the client.
3. If the client does not accept the decision, the client will request a conference with the Executive Director, Randi Thompson, in writing. The request is to include a description of the decision or action being disputed and why the client disagrees with it. The Executive Director will consult with the client within two weeks of receiving the request and may consult with appropriate professionals, if necessary.
4. A written decision will be completed within two weeks of the meeting and sent to the client. Information shall be included regarding how to take the next step if one is indicated.
5. If the client does not accept the decision, the client will request a subcommittee meeting of the Board of Directors of Kidsave International to review all documentation to date in writing and include the necessary information. The subcommittee will complete its review

of the client's request, agency record, and consult with those of its choosing. The subcommittee may or may not decide to hold a meeting with the client.

6. A written decision shall be reached within 30 days from the date the written request was received by the board and sent to the client. All decisions made by the subcommittee will be final.
7. The Executive Director shall review all grievances according to agency policy and will ensure that there is not retaliation against the person who files a grievance.

### **“Holding” a Child**

Kidsave staff, in cooperation with country officials, identify children to participate in Summer Miracles, as a hosting program. Within reason, we have the right to refuse participation to certain children if we do not feel confident in their ability to succeed in the program. Essentially, we do have the right to identify children for you to host. We do not, however, have the right nor the authority to “hold” or identify children for adoption by their host families. That is done by the governmental body that oversees adoption in the sending country.

**If you wish to adopt your host child, you must apply to a Hague accredited adoption agency that works in the country where your host child is from.** It is up to you to move forward in a timely manner. During or prior to the program you can complete your home study, apply for INS approval and begin your documentation. Inquiries regarding your host child's legal availability can only be made through a licensed adoption agency after your host child has returned to their country. Kidsave has no authority or legal sanction to act on your behalf to facilitate your adoption or identify a match in your child's country. Your paperwork submitted in country by an adoption agency is the only legal and legitimate way a prospective adoptive parent is identified on the behalf of a child. We always advocate for every child who participates and, with you, work hard to make summer miracles happen. The realization of that dream will actually occur after the children have returned to their countries and the Summer Miracles Program is over.

### **Hospitality, Meals and Customs**

Hospitality in other countries is very different than American hospitality. Most children and chaperones will wait to be asked to take some food or drink, and would not think of helping themselves. American hosts need to be sure to let their guests know that they can either help themselves to things in the refrigerator or they need to offer meals, snacks and beverages several times a day to their guests. In some cultures, it is customary to protest even if you want something, so be sure to establish early on how you will handle the availability of food and drink. Your chaperone may be too shy to go into your pantry or refrigerator, even upon invitation so find a way to make them accessible. Try to learn something about their likes and dislikes and food and drink items that are customary or special for them.

Latin Americans eat three meals a day. The largest meal of the day is lunch. Snacks are usually breads, fruits, and coffee or hot chocolate. Latin American cultures typically include a large lunch, followed by an afternoon siesta. Common foods for Latin America are fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs, soups, salads, rice with meat, and potatoes. Rice and soup are typical staples and hopefully can be included in the daily fare. Breakfast usually includes fruit and eggs. The children are not accustomed to cold cereals. They are also not used to fast foods so typical in the United States.

Please limit the amount of junk food, sweets and soda that are given to the children both in the homes and at the events. They are not accustomed to it and the chaperones and country officials ask that efforts are made to maintain healthy eating habits. Try to substitute sodas and candy with juice and fruit and keep fast food items to a minimum.

Chaperones are eager to see the local sights, so each host family and other volunteers should plan entertaining and culturally enriching activities for the chaperone during his or her stay. Be sure to take the time to let chaperones know what is planned for them. Ask them if they have any special interests or requests as soon as they arrive.

### Host Family Emergency & Safe Houses

Should the Summer Miracles child participant exhibit behavioral problems or health emergencies, host families should:

- Call 911 if the child is endangering himself/herself or others;
- Get in contact with your Community Coordinator and the child's chaperone

Safe houses are identified prior to the program in the event a child must be moved. Children can be moved only in the event of a host family emergency, an issue of safety, or in extreme cases of a poor host family match, and at the chaperone's request. These safe house families have had a home visit and have current criminal check and child abuse clearance and have also completed training. They may be past host families, experienced adoptive parents or licensed foster families. Safe house families must also complete all the required hosting documents and have completed training.

### Legal Availability of Your Host Child

Kidsave makes every effort to determine that each child participating in the Summer Miracles Program is legally free for adoption. However, because we are recognized by the sending countries as a hosting program or a rest and recreation program, not a placement/adoption agency, the information may not always be accurate or complete. The countries do not always consider this essential or legitimate information to provide to organizations providing rest and recreation programs for their children.

Children from Colombia are referred by their defender team and country officials and cannot participate if their legal status is undetermined. In Colombia, one of the criteria for participation is that an abandonment resolution has been finalized (the child's parental rights are terminated).

Final confirmation of your host child's legal availability for international adoption can only be requested or determined through a licensed placement agency or facilitator after your host child has returned to their orphanage/foster family.

### Medical Insurance, Appointments and Evaluations

Some Summer Miracles hosting communities have a medical network willing to provide pro-bono medical and dental examinations and evaluations from local practitioners. Elective medical, psychological or developmental examinations or assessments will be at your expense. Your coordinator and medical partnership team will provide you with a list of providers in your community who have offered pro bono or reduced fee services. Never hesitate to ask a practitioner if they are willing to offer their services for free or at a reduced cost. Many are moved by the children and would like to help in some way.

Kidsave covers the insurance premium for a basic major medical and accident policy to cover each child and chaperone participating in the program while in the United States. The insurance will pay 90% for covered services under established "reasonable and customary" charge guidelines for your area and the type of service. There is no deductible. Families are expected to pay the 10% co-

pays and uncovered services. You will receive the insurance information from your Community Coordinator.

Some families have found that their own insurance policy will cover the child they host, under the guardianship provisions of the policy. It is worth checking into, as a regular insurance policy will often cover pre-existing conditions, preventive care and diagnostic tests that the Kidsave Travel Policy does not.

### **Motion Sickness**

Be prepared for air, boat, or car sickness. When the children arrive at the airport, they have had a long flight and probably have eaten foods that they seldom get (e.g., butter, carbonated soft drinks). When you meet your child at the airport, bring some oversized plastic cups, garbage bags, baby wipes, etc. in your car, as well as a change of clothing. Also, be on the alert for the first few days as their bodies are adjusting to the new environment. You may want to keep some children's motion-sickness medications (Bonine, Dramamine, etc.) on hand, and if your child does get ill, try to keep a window open slightly. Have your child sit where he or she can see out the front of the car over the dashboard (this may involve riding in a booster seat to sit higher). Try not to make a big fuss as the child will likely be embarrassed and frightened to be carsick. If you are calm, your visitor will be less frightened. Most children quickly get over this problem, if it occurs at all. However, most families keep a supply of wipes and garbage bags in the car for the child's entire stay.

### **Moving Children**

The safety of the children is paramount; as is a safe and stable environment for the summer. Our program protocols and the country regulations allow the children to be moved to another home only in the event of a host family emergency, if there is an issue of safety or a poor match, or if the chaperone requests a move. Please advise Kidsave staff and your Community Coordinator immediately of any serious concerns regarding your host child. We are available to help you with any difficulties you may encounter. Our first efforts will be to assist you in managing and/or resolving the problem. We will do that through the involvement of the local social worker, the chaperone and the director of the program. The chaperone may be moved to your home to provide additional support and intervention. If the problem cannot be resolved and the behavior or problem poses a threat to the safety of you or your host child, a move may be necessary. Do not be embarrassed or feel the inability to meet a child's needs or manage difficult behavior is a reflection on you. These are children who have experienced loss and trauma in their lives and may present with some challenges or needs that you are unable to meet. The criteria for moving a child are as follows:

#### **Safety**

- The child's behavior places him/her in danger of harm to self or others, and cannot be adequately managed by host family
- The host family's parenting is not adequate to manage child's behavior, thereby placing child at risk or harm to self or others
- The host families home or living environment poses a health hazard/threat to the safety of the child

#### **Poor Match**

- The child openly does not like the family/family member, dramatically impacting the Summer Miracles experience and has not improved with professional intervention

- Parent(s)/family member(s) openly do not like the child, dramatically impacting the Summer Miracles experience, and relationship has not improved with professional intervention

### Chaperone Request

- As the child's guardian, the chaperone has the prerogative to request a child be moved
- **Regardless of the circumstances, Kidsave must ultimately respect the chaperone's wishes as the guardian for the child**

### Overnights

Keep in mind that the children **cannot** spend the night with individuals who have not been approved. Children can spend overnights with other families that are hosting children in the program as long as permission from the local coordinator has been given.

### Other People Caring for Your Host Child

Understand that all persons caring for your host child unsupervised by you must have a current child abuse and criminal check. Kidsave requires that if a volunteer/babysitter/etc. will be spending any time with a child unsupervised by their host family or chaperone, the volunteer must have a face to face interview with a licensed social worker. Any volunteer who will be caring for a child in their home will need a criminal check, child abuse clearance and home visit by a licensed social worker in their home.

**For families outside of a hosting community:** Must identify a backup family/individual and have them pre-approved with your agency to spend time with your host child in your home. Family or individual must have clearances done and have a meeting with your social worker who must approve the family/individual and provide Kidsave with a written report.

### Transporting Your Child

Your child may never have used a seatbelt before. Your child will receive a visitor's handbook that explains seatbelts; you can use this guide to review their purpose and use. Learn the Spanish phrases for seatbelt use and enforce this rule at all times. Make no exception to the following rule: children must be buckled up at all times. Check the weight and height of your child. He or she may be happier in a booster seat if under 45 lbs. If under 35 lbs. it is unsafe for the child to ride without a booster/child safety seat. Activate all child safety features your vehicle offers. These children are unaccustomed to riding in cars and will be fascinated by opening and closing automatic windows, etc. They may experiment with the knobs, latches and dials, possibly opening their doors on the freeway. Most new cars have a feature that allows you to lock the doors so that they can only be opened from the outside.

You should check your state's Department of Motor Vehicles website for state laws and recommendations about child safety seats. In California, children must be restrained in a safety seat until they are either six years old or weigh 60 pounds. The National Traffic Safety Administration recommends keeping children in booster seats until age 8, unless the child is at least 4'9". Seat belts fit properly when the child's knees bend comfortably over the edge of the seat, the lap belt rests on the upper thighs or hips, away from the abdomen and the shoulder belt comes across the chest and collar bone.

Additionally, **all persons who will be driving a host child during summer must submit to Kidsave proof of insurance.** We recommend that anyone who will be driving a host child have at least \$500,000 of bodily injury and property damage insurance.

Keep some tapes or CDs in the car (Spanish language recordings are great, but music will suffice) to entertain children while you are driving. Disney tapes are usually popular, especially if the children have the opportunity to see the videos. Nursery rhymes, even for older kids, are another great tool to have in the car. The kids can pick up on the rhyming patterns long before they understand the meaning of the words and will sing along almost immediately.

### **Vacation Policy**

Family vacations are permitted during the program. Vacations should not take place in the first or last week of the program. Vacations cannot exceed one week . It is important to note that families/kids may not miss more than one weekend event and that weekend is restricted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of the program ONLY (subject to change). Vacations need to be planned accordingly. Families must advise their coordinator and child's chaperone regarding all travel plans and provide contact information during the vacation period. Out of state travel is only permitted upon approval by the child's chaperone. Vacation plans should be provided to the community coordinator in advance of the children's travel.

### **Debriefing/Host Family Evaluation**

Each year we meet as a staff to evaluate and review the summer program and strive to address concerns or problems and make improvements in our practices. We rely on the feedback from our participants to accomplish this. Some communities conduct a face to face debriefing; others do telephone interviews with individual families. Some years we conduct an online survey for all participants. Please provide your honest feedback and constructive criticism in these evaluations. We count on your candor and input to do what we do even better.

## **Summer Miracles Team**

### **Host Family**

Host Families are an integral part of the local Summer Miracles community. Host families are at the heart of the program and child's visit. Families work collaboratively with the community coordinator and social worker/agency partner to fulfill all hosting and program requirements. Host families provide critical input into the advocacy process for each child. Additionally, host families are part of the fundraising effort necessary to bring children to the local community.

### **Local Summer Miracles Community**

#### **Community Coordinator**

Oversees and coordinates the creation, development and maintenance of a Summer Miracles community. This individual is your primary point of contact for your participation in the Summer Miracles Program. Primary areas of responsibility include:

- Coordinating efforts of volunteers and local professionals
- Maintaining timeline/schedule and momentum of community efforts, events, training and preparation of families
- Recruiting host families and identifying safe houses
- Ensuring host family compliance with program requirements ( including the completion of Summer Miracles Host and Visiting Family paperwork, completion of required screenings and checks and completion of required Host Family Education by each participating host family)
- Oversight of weekend events and publicity

- Communicating with Kidsave staff regarding the needs, accomplishments, and status of the Summer Miracles community by:
  - ❖ Gathering/providing feedback during and post-program regarding needs, gaps in services, and areas needing improvement.
  - ❖ Alerting Summer Miracles staff to non-compliance with training requirements or Host family requirements.
  - ❖ Ensuring that community efforts are accomplished according to Kidsave guidelines, policies and procedures.
  - ❖ Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of participating families, as prescribed in the Confidentiality/Client's Rights Agreement.

Moreover, the Community Coordinator is a valued "team" member to Kidsave staff who:

- Provides information regarding policies and procedures, schedule of events, children, and Kidsave resources
- Acts as a "Point Person" during Summer Miracles to coordinate and supervise general wellbeing of children, families and chaperones
- Functions as intermediary in conflict between community members
- Advises and involves Kidsave staff as appropriate sounding board for family concerns, and directs those concerns to Kidsave staff
- Alerts Kidsave staff immediately of any gaps in program or services needed by families, children, volunteers or chaperones

**For families outside of a hosting community:** The Summer Miracles Intern will act as your 'coordinator' and will play all of the above roles as are relevant.

### **Planning Committee**

Within each Summer Miracles community, there will be additional people involved in the coordination of the program. To borrow a phrase from Hillary Rodham Clinton, the realization of a Summer Miracles community in your city will "take a village." In addition to host family recruitment, two of the most critical roles the planning committee will assume are 1) recruitment of volunteers to provide manpower and momentum and 2) fundraising necessary to bring children to the local community.

### **Social Worker/Local Agency Partner**

Your local agency partner/social worker will work closely with your coordinator and host families to ensure that host families meet all hosting requirements, complete required training and receive support throughout the hosting process.

### *Role of the Local Social Worker*

Kidsave builds partnerships with local home study/placement agencies and their staff to provide support to our host families before, during, and after the summer program. The local social worker will serve as the social work point person for your community, working collaboratively with the local Community Coordinator and the Director of the Summer Miracles program.

The responsibility of the local social worker is to complete the Family Psychosocial Study, and in some cases, the home study for each potential host family. In addition, the local social worker approves every family to participate in the program and matches the participating children and families. The local social worker will ensure that all host families have completed the required training to host.

The local social worker will also provide support to you and your host child during the summer program and will be available to resolve difficult situations that may arise. And, during the rare occasions that a child would need to be removed from your home, the local social worker would support the host family through the child's move to a safe house. Additionally, the social worker will co-facilitate with Kidsave's coordinators two mandatory support sessions for host families which will be scheduled at the conclusion of week two and approximately one week prior to the children's departure. The first session is designed to help address behavior issues, difficulties with transition to family living, etc. The second session will help families prepare to say good-bye to their host child, discuss next steps and how they will communicate with their host child when they return to their country.

### National Support

Vice President/Director of Family Visit Programs

Lauren Reicher Gordon

Contact: Lauren@kidsave.org or 1-888-Kidsave, (310) 642-7283

- Oversees the operation, management and strategic direction of Kidsave's Summer Miracles and Weekend Miracles Programs
- Oversees referral of children and assignment of children to communities.
- Oversees the facilitation with development and relationships with in country partners
- Functions as National "point person" during Summer Miracles program.
- Oversees and guides the development of new Summer Miracles communities
- Responsible for relationship and partnership development
- Oversees program compliance in collaboration with Kidsave staff and allied professionals/volunteers.
- Problem solves and troubleshoots programmatic concerns during program.
- Involves appropriate persons, agencies and resources to meet the needs of children, families, chaperones, volunteers and coordinators during the program.
- Maintains program safety and integrity year round.
- Integrates feedback of families, officials, volunteers and professionals in annual program review and plans for development and improvement.
- Overall coordination of the national programs of Summer Miracles communities
- Assist with development of new Summer Miracles communities
- Fields program inquiries via phone or email
- Functions as point person and liaison to community coordinators in fundraising, recruitment of families and documentation management.
- Assists with program compliance in collaboration with Kidsave staff and allied professionals/volunteers
- Oversees coordination of travel schedule and arrangements for children and chaperones
- Oversees coordination of insurance
- Assists with coordination of media resources and efforts
- The manager acts as the primary point person for host families who are outside of a hosting community

### Co-Founders

Randi Thompson, Executive Director Contact:

randi@kidsave.org or (310) 642-7283



## **Resources Provided**

The resources below will be provided to you by your local community coordinator or in the online community resources page.

**Advocacy Tools**

**Vignettes**

**Host Family Application**

**Confidentiality agreement**

**Kidsave Application Checklist**

**Authorization for Disclosure**

**Clients Rights**

**Adult and Child Release Form to Use**

**Likeness Adult Only Release Form to Use**

**Likeness**

**Your Host Family Letter**

**Host Family Agreement**

**Profile of the Older Post Institutionalized**

**Child Talking to Your Host Child About**

**Adoption-NOT! Spanish Child Talk**

**Guidelines to Making a Decision to Adopt**

**National Web Resources**

**Reading and Resource List**