



United Jewish
Federation
OF TIDEWATER



SHINSHINIM
HOST FAMILY
INFO BOOKLET
2026/2027

Booklet for ShinShin Host Families in Tidewater

You have been chosen as a host family for Tidewater's shinshin! This will be a rewarding experience for your entire family. Host families, in other communities, regard this as one of the most enriching experiences they have ever had. They feel that they have gained not only a new family member in their ShinShin but a whole new Israeli family as well.

The following material is intended to answer basic questions and provide some guidance to help you make the most of this opportunity. The ShinShinim Program provides a rare gift to Jewish Institutions in the community by giving our community the opportunity to develop a close personal relationship with Israelis and Israel.

As questions arise, please do not hesitate to call Nofar Trem, the Supervisor of the ShinShinim Program. 757-969-3909. You will be asked for your thoughts and reflections on the experience. Host families provide important insights and your input will be greatly appreciated.

Who are the ShinShinim?

The Tidewater ShinShinim, Evyatar and Liel, have been selected for this program from a pool of over 2,000 applicants. These talented young people have made the difficult decision to defer their army service for a year to serve as ambassadors for their country. Previous experiences in group work, leadership skills, and English language capability are just a few of the criteria.

What will the ShinShinim be doing?

The ShinShinim will serve as informal Israel educators in the Tidewater organizations that include synagogues, day schools, supplementary schools, retirement homes, the JCC, University Hillels, summer camp, and more! They will teach about Israel, Israeli culture, Jewish identity, and Jewish celebrations. Additionally, they will develop community-wide programs about Israel. The ShinShinim will be a living bridge between the community and Israel.

The ShinShinim work out of the Reba and Sam Sandler Family Campus and travel to all their off-site engagements using the vehicle provided by the UJFT. Evyatar and Liel have a very dynamic schedule, with events on different days and at different times, varying from week to week.

In general, when there are any scheduling questions, feel free to go over the shinshin's schedule with them or with Nofar Trem. Before making any long-range family plans that include the ShinShin, the host family must check with Nofar to ensure that the ShinShin will be available.

Obligations of a host 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 your home's rules, and we encourage you to speak candidly about how your family life runs.

Please remember that the ShinShinim are young adults who have been chosen for their maturity, skills, and considerable experience. We expect the ShinShinim to be respectful of all household rules and responsibilities. **Please be aware that the ShinShinim are not allowed to babysit or be left alone with the kids.**

As a host parent, you are a caregiver responsible for ensuring that your ShinShin is properly housed, fed, and protected from harm. You will need to provide them with their own bedroom with a door that can close for privacy and easy access to a (shared or

private) bathroom. Private space is important. Please ensure that your ShinShin has personal space, and that their bedroom is not used for other purposes that have the potential to infringe on their privacy.

Food

Food is particularly important in the hosting relationship. As with all members of your family, please be sure your ShinShin knows the rules about 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 or groceries to prepare their own meals. They may be too shy to ask, so you may need to take the initiative in providing food options and involving them in the shopping process, allowing them to learn about the available foods. They may also need help learning how to navigate the kitchen and feel comfortable advocating for the foods they enjoy. Discuss with your Shinshin the types of food they like and dislike.

If you are going out to dinner without your ShinShin, please be sure they have food to eat if they are not joining you, just as you would for your own teen.

Your ShinShin will need to take lunch to work most days, so please ensure that you develop a system and communicate the details with them.

Cell Phones

The Shinshinim are provided a cell phone plan by the Federation, and do not need to be included in your family phone plan. There should be no issues with their ability to communicate with their host families or friends and family in Israel. It's important to remember that there is a 6- or 7-hour time difference between Tidewater and Israel, and your Shinshin may be on the phone at odd hours.

Transportation

Each Shinshin will have a UJFT-owned vehicle and automobile insurance. The Shinshinim are the only ones permitted to drive in these vehicles. Each Shinshin will have a 7/11 debit card from UJFT to pay for gas. Their driving is limited to travel within a 1.5-hour radius of Tidewater unless approved by Nofar Trem.

Curfew

The Jewish Agency has established an 11:00 pm curfew for all Shinshinim on weekdays and weekends. However, if your expectation is that a Shinshin arrives home earlier than that, please discuss expectations with the Shinshin. Exceptions to the curfew may be granted by Nofar Trem or a host parent in communication with Nofar.

Health Insurance

Each ShinShin has health insurance for their year of service through the Jewish Agency for Israel.

- In the case of illness, the ShinShin must inform Nofar Trem.
- In case of medical emergency, please take the ShinShin to the emergency room and contact Nofar Trem as soon as possible.
- In the event that your ShinShin needs to see a specialist, please let Nofar Trem know as soon as possible. Please also let us know if you are able to help get them an appointment with the type of specialist that may be required.

Vacations

If your family is going on vacation, you are welcome to include your ShinShin in the trip, as with all other family activities, if you deem it appropriate and feasible. However, please consult with Nofar Trem about your plans well in advance to determine your ShinShin's availability. If it is not feasible for your ShinShin to join you, please give Nofar Trem as much advance notice as possible. Both ShinShinim will be scheduled to return to Israel for a break in February.

Finances

Upon arrival in Tidewater, each Shinshin will open their own bank account. The ShinShinim Program provides each ShinShin with a monthly stipend of \$300. They also receive a transportation allowance and a winter clothing allowance (for winter coats, boots, hats, gloves, etc.) 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

Jewish holidays are an important part of Israel's national culture. Holidays inevitably bring a longing for family and friends, and the ShinShinim may become wistful and subdued. Before a holiday, share with your ShinShin how your family observes it. Use this as an opportunity to learn more about her family and their traditions. Perhaps incorporate some of your ShinShin's customs from home into your family's observances this year.

Cultural Differences

At times, you will act as a cultural advisor who will need to explain behaviors that seem odd. Recognizing differences and bonding over 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. Just as you would with your own teen, please reach out and engage in conversation.

Drugs

The ShinShinim Program does not tolerate illegal drug use. All ShinShinim have provided written and verbal assurance that they should expect to be sent home should they violate this rule. Call Nofar Trem immediately if you have any issues regarding that.

Keys to Hosting:

1. Make regular time to share the details of your life and be interested in learning about the ShinShin's life.
2. Be available to lend a helping hand, offer counsel, and give an occasional hug.
3. Maintain your normal schedule and lifestyle. Encourage your ShinShin to participate as much as they can, but recognize that they have busy schedules.
4. Be open, sensitive, respectful, and keep all lines of communication open.

HOST FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

General Safety

- List of emergency phone numbers should be available in an easily accessible location –including contact information for family members, emergency services, medical services, and other relevant information
- Review the use of 911 as the first call in any emergency.

Home Safety

- Home should have functioning smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors
- Make sure the Shinshin understands the home escape plan in the event of fire/home emergency, and where the family meeting location is.
- Introduce Shinshin to neighbors the Shinshin can go to in case of emergency (if relevant).
- Make sure the Shinshin understands how all windows and doors operate; how locks and alarm system works.
- Ensure the Shinshin understands what to do in the event of an electricity outage: location of flashlights, generator, candles, and rules for operating appliances.
- Ensure the Shinshin knows the location of fire extinguishers and how to operate them.
- Make sure the Shinshin knows where the fuse box is and how to respond to a blown fuse.
- Review any safety rules/procedures related to a pool or hot tub

Kitchen Safety

- Make sure the Shinshin understands how to properly and safely operate basic kitchen appliances, including stove, oven, and microwave.
- Ensure the Shinshin understands how to safely use any additional kitchen appliances, such as a toaster oven, slow cooker, and air fryer.
- Discuss with your Shinshin any restrictions on kitchen use if they are alone in the home.

Fireplace

- Shinshinim should never operate a fireplace (indoor or outdoor) without permission from the host parents.
- Make sure the Shinshin know where and how to use all fireplace/fire pit tools and safety measures.

Bedroom Safety

- Ensure the Shinshin knows how to operate any electronics in the bedroom, such as electric blankets and space heaters.
- Shinshinim should never use candles, matches, lighters, incense, or other forms of fire in the bedroom without permission from the host parents.

Bathroom Safety

- Make sure the Shinshin understands how to operate any appliances in the bathroom safely.
- Make sure the Shinshin knows what to do in the case of a clogged toilet.

Weather Safety

- Make sure the Shinshin understands how to respond to severe weather and any resources/tools available in the home.

HOST FAMILY CONVERSATION GUIDE

Kitchen and Food

- Which meals do you have as a family that you want the Shinshin to be present for?
- What time is dinner? Does the family eat dinner together? How and by what time do you want the Shinshin to communicate whether they will be home for dinner?
- How does food shopping work? Do you keep a list of grocery items the Shinshin should add to? Do you expect the Shinshin to buy any of their own food? Do you want the Shinshin to join you for grocery shopping? How do you want the Shinshin to communicate with you if a grocery item is running low/runs out?
- Talk to the Shinshin about the foods they like and don't like. Does the Shinshin have any food-related allergies to be aware of?
- Does anyone in the home have any food-related allergies or dietary restrictions? Review any family rules regarding allergies and kitchen use.
- Discuss the level of Kashrut observance in the home. Review any kitchen guidelines related to kashrut. Make sure your Shinshin feels comfortable with how your family observes (or doesn't observe) Kashrut.
- Do you expect the Shinshin to wash their dishes, place in the sink, put in the dishwasher? Do you expect dishes to be rinsed after use before loading into the dishwasher?
- Is the Shinshin welcome to help themselves to food? Is there a specific place where certain foods are kept? Are there certain foods that the Shinshin should not eat or take without permission?

- Does your family allow non-Kosher food to be brought into the home from restaurants? Can they be eaten on the dishes? Heated up in the microwave/stove?
- What dishes are for everyday use? Are there specific cabinets, appliances, and items that the Shinshin should avoid using?
- Where in the home is food allowed and not allowed to be consumed? What are the rules around food/beverages in the Shinshin's bedroom?
- Is the Shinshin allowed to invite a friend over for a meal? How do you want the Shinshin to communicate the request with you?
- How would you like the Shinshin to store food?

General Household

- Are there general household chores you would like the Shinshin to assist the family with? Taking out the garbage, dishes, basic home tidiness, etc.
- How does your family handle laundry? How/when can the Shinshin plan on doing their laundry? How does your specific washer or drier work? (Remind them about emptying the lint trap)
- Are there expectations for the Shinshin's bedroom cleanliness? Is there extra bedding available? How often is bedding to be washed?
- Is there a vacuum for the Shinshin to use?
- Are there other cleaning supplies available to the Shinshin?
- Do you employ a housekeeper or cleaning person? If so, please discuss the guidelines and expectations with the Shinshin.
- How does the home heating/cooling work? Is the Shinshin allowed to adjust the temperature?
- Does the home have a security system? Cameras? Review any security system with the Shinshin.
- Where should the Shinshin park? Are they allowed to park in the street? If they have a friend over, where do they park?

Bathroom

- How does the shower work?
- Where do you keep towels, toilet paper, and toiletries?
- Where do you keep the toilet plunger?
- Who is responsible for purchasing toiletries?
- Where is the Shinshin able to store their toiletries?
- Which bathroom(s) is the Shinshin able to use on a regular basis?

Scheduling and Communication

- What does a typical morning look like at home when everyone is getting ready? How does the Shinshin fit into that?
- How does your family manage their schedules? How do you keep track of where everyone is and when to expect them home? How do you update each other if there are changes to the schedule? Make sure to review schedules regularly with the Shinshin. Their schedule is not the same each week.
- Do you have a family bulletin board, calendar, message board?
- If the home phone rings, do you expect the Shinshin to answer the phone? How and where do you want them to take messages? Should they listen to the answering machine?
- What time do you expect them home? How do you want them to alert you if they're going to be late? If they're the last one home, are they expected to set an alarm?
- How do you prefer Shinshin to communicate with you during work hours? After work hours? Phone calls or text messages?
- To what extent does the Shinshin want to be "checked on?" How do you hope the Shinshin communicates with you? Feedback? Challenges? How do you create open communication with your Shinshin?
- Are there any topics that you prefer not to be discussed at family meals? With older children? With younger children?

Other

- Is this Shinshin allowed to have friends over? How do you want them to ask/communicate with you?
- Is the Shinshin allowed to have another Shinshin spend the night? No other overnight guests are permitted. Can another Shinshin join your family for Shabbat? A holiday? Is it an open invitation? How far in advance do you expect your Shinshin to communicate this request with you?
- Does your family have "quiet" hours"? What are rules about noise in communal rooms? The Shinshin's bedroom? Outside?
- Are the rules around the usage of televisions, computers, internet, cell phones? Do you have rules around phones at meals?
- Social media: Are there any members of the family you don't want posted on social media? Are there any areas or items in the home you do not want posted? Are you ok with photos being tagged?