Overnight Visitation Programs

Planning Manual

I. Introduction and Welcome

Congratulations on building an overnight visitation program. Overnight programs are a Caltech tradition that come with the benefits of exposure to houses, residences, programs, and students, as well as the opportunity to see college life up close. These programs are the hallmark of Caltech tradition and are best planned with colleagues who can help. In that spirit, thank you for working with the Office of Student Experience, Security, and the Caltech Housing Office.

A. Planning Manual

Thank you for your support and collaboration. We look forward to hearing about your overnight initiative. We have created this manual to help you shape your program, develop health and safety protocols, and collaborate with others invested in your success! We hope this manual will serve as your guide. This manual goes together with planning, meetings, and dialogue.

While this document is meant to help you think about the issues for your program, it is critical to schedule a meeting as soon as you know the date and scope of your event so that we can jointly review the needs and staffing issues together. The more lead time we have in our offices, the less likely we are to have conflicts or challenges during the visit.

While most programs run smoothly, there have been challenging issues that have disrupted the program and the campus. We try to avoid these situations, but in these rare cases, we want to consider the health and safety of our visitors and residents and have a plan in place to manage these situations. It is also important that we think about where they will socialize and sleep while they are here.

There are some obvious planning issues to manage, and we can help with those. For example, if a house is having an event off campus or with alcohol on the visit weekend, that group is not allowed to house any guests who are minors. We would not allow a minor into a bar in most cases, so I would not want to schedule an overnight stay in a house with a party. It is also important to make sure that residents at the hosting house have adequate supervision during the event. Our RAs and RLCs are here to support your work, but they do have travel and vacation schedules as well as other obligations that sometimes take them out of their residential roles. We want to be sure that the locations chosen for your program can be fully staffed and the students can be fully supported.

B. Conferences vs Visitation Programs

Overnight visitation programs are hosted by student affairs offices to have students or prospective students, stay on campus and learn more about Caltech and our student experience. The participants in these programs are considered "Hosted Guests" and stay with current students on campus.

Caltech Housing also houses summer conferences, which are overnight programs with guests attending or participating in a conference on or near campus. Summer conferences are important to the Institute, and while they may not be student affairs initiatives, they must be affiliated with a Caltech sponsor. The participants in these programs are considered "Conference Guests" and are assigned their own housing on campus. If you are looking to house a summer conference on campus, please work directly with the Housing Office on logistics and plans. The Housing office will notify other offices by way of the Housing roster.

II. Planning Your Program

A. Agenda

The key to planning a residential visitation program is planning at least two to six months in advance. Some programs are large and lengthy and need a full six months to plan. These include the summer programs and the admissions visitation weekends. Other programs are small and scheduled for a few people who plan to stay overnight or for the weekend. These small events can be planned in a few weeks.

B. Operating Procedures

Check-in

- Host offices manage check-in for their guests, including after-hours check-in.
- Housing can help with preparing assignments and room codes in advance of your group's arrival.

In an emergency, the AVP of Student Experience can be contacted to help, however, please do not reach out to the on-call RLC unless it is a Caltech student emergency. The on-call RLC needs to remain available for emergencies with currently enrolled students, and cannot help with a late check-in.

After Hours

Students do arrive after business hours and need help managing the arrival. With this in mind, you will want a plan for students checking in after hours. This will need to be someone in your program. You will also need a plan for meals after hours, on-call information if something goes wrong, escort information, and safe transportation.

Programming

Caltech's residential experience is special and unique, and we are excited to share our options with anyone. If part of the visit includes talking about the residential experience, and you need help from our team to explain the options or the process for selecting a house, please let us know. We are happy to support your initiative. This is part of our collective work. If the program includes interaction with student clubs and organizations, OSE would like to meet and discuss this with you. Please do not contact the clubs directly without the support of the OSE.

Faculty in Residence

Please work with the Office of Student Experience if you would like to engage the Faculty in Residence. We are happy to share their experience and role with prospective and visiting students. That said, we are judicious with their time and talents and want to ensure that all work for student affairs is manageable. If they are busy with another event, we will let you know.

Conduct

If a student engages in problematic conduct, the lead office will be contacted to manage the situation. Please send campus policies in advance of the visit, so that all guests are clear about our expectations of them.

On occasion, guests have experienced problematic conduct from our students during a visitation weekend. Please talk to your hosts about our hazing policy and the importance of not floating guests, an act where we pour water over their heads. That is neither welcoming nor allowed for visitors.

C. Housing

Occupancy

It is never preferred to have a guest sleeping on the floor. That is not part of the welcoming and inclusive environment that we want to create in our communities. That said, this is the standard for some programs. If sleeping on the floor is the expectation for your program, please manage the number of students sleeping on the floor and the occupancy of the rooms. It is recommended that students only host one guest in their room. That would mean that there would be a maximum of 2 students sleeping on the floor at any one time.

We do not want to overfill a room and compromise the health and safety of anyone staying or living on campus. In the past, some rooms were filled with multiple guests. Sometimes, students find this to be more fun, but it comes with drawbacks that need to be considered. Please be sure that there is enough space for the involved students. More recently, we have received complaints from students who felt obligated to host as many as five people in their small room.

Hosts and Host Trainings

Students are often chosen to host a guest. This is a lovely gesture that helps our guests feel welcome and included. Please consider how hosts and residents are matched and be mindful of gender and gender identity. Our students are amazing at showing students around campus and introducing them to student life. Ensuring a positive match is critical to the success of any visitation program. Please have the list of student hosts vetted by the Dean's Office, the Title IX Office, and the Office of Student Experience.

Gender and Room Assignments:

We make every effort to ensure that our incoming and prospective students have the appropriate roommate situation, especially as they begin their Caltech experience. All hosts must be trained by the responsible office and the Office of Student Experience. This will ensure that we are clear on policies, resources, and how to manage an emergency or particularly complex situation during the visit.

Visiting students are assigned a hos based on gender. Cis-gendered women are matched with cis-gendered women. The same for cis-gender men. A non-binary student has the option to room with another non-binary student, a male student, or a female student. All students in these rooms must be committed to an inclusive rooming model. Language for this can be supported by the Caltech Center for Inclusion and Diversity, the AVP for Diversity, and the Chief Diversity Officer.

D. Managing Medical Issues

Wellness

It is vital to have clear expectations for what happens if a student gets sick or needs medical or psychiatric attention. This could mean a student has COVID, a broken bone, an allergic reaction, or even gets homesick. Please be ready to support this student should the student need to (a) return home, (b) go to urgent care, or (c) stay because they cannot travel.

The on-call team, together with offices on campus, should have a plan to manage a diverse set of circumstances. To help, the on-call lead and Security will need a copy of the visitor's emergency contact information along with allergies and other medications and needs.
The Office of Student Experience cannot be responsible for administering drugs, EpiPens, or other medical needs.

E. Information for Campus Partners

Communication

Information about the program, the leaders, and the visitors needs to be communicated to relevant offices (OSE, Housing, Security, Program leads, VPSA, etc.) as part of the planning process. All final information must be submitted to the Housing office and Security no later than the Thursday before the event. That way the names of guests can be added to our campus rosters, and everyone can have the contact information of the emergency contact for that student.

In addition, the RLC on-call for the dates of the event will need to meet with the program leads to ensure appropriate triage for program participants. In this meeting the RLC can share how they can be reached and when they will reach out to the designated on-call person for the program.

Guest Rosters

All guests must be on a housing roster. These rosters are developed and distributed every Friday. All information needs to be presented to Housing, Security, and the Office of Student Experience no later than the Thursday before the program begins. That way we know who is staying, where they are staying, and how to manage numbers, emergencies, and other issues that emerge.

Schedule

Please send the schedule of your program to the Office of Student Experience, the Housing Office, Caltech Security, and any other relevant offices so that everyone is familiar with what is happening.

F. Registration and Approval

Events in the Residences

Some on-campus visitation programs include events in the houses or on campus. If the program includes student-led events, those will need to be submitted to our event registration process. Visitors who are part of these programs are never invited to events with alcohol.
In the past, students have planned events that may not match the Institute's values. Please be clear with your expectations, so that students are not involved in dangerous or hazing-type events.

Events can be registered through the Director of Student Engagement at spa.caltech.edu. Approval of the events is the responsibility of the organizing office. That said, registration can come through the Office of Student Experience, so that campus partners, including security and the RLCs, are familiar with what is expected and what has been approved, so they can manage accordingly.

G. Program Staff

The most successful programs are those with adequate staffing, both in planning and in the program. Residential visitation programs must provide their own on-call support. The leadership of these programs is more familiar with their visitors and has built-in relationships with visiting students. They can also respond to students in their programs without sacrificing on-call support for current students.

On-call Expectations

In the event of an emergency, Caltech Security will call the on-call RLC, per our standard practice. If the situation requires a higher-level response, the RLC will contact your program's on-call staff member. The on-call staff member designated within your group should be prepared to report to campus, manage issues with minors, and support the needs of the visitors. Please provide all the on-call information well in advance of the program.

If the situation is minor, for example, a twisted ankle, we will notify you without calling you. In a campus emergency, it will be important that we can evacuate and respond to emergencies for all residents. In these cases, the on-call program lead will be expected to help.

Training Requirements

It is required to have a staff meeting with Housing, Security, and the Office of Student Experience, in advance of a visitation program. These groups all do on-call work for the Institute and will benefit from having information about the program, the protocols, and how to be supportive. Training of this nature is best planned 6 months in advance, although it can be planned one month in advance.

Please ensure that the Resident Associates (RAs) have had a presentation in advance of your program, that way they know what to expect. This is more of an information-based training since the program is expected to provide the relevant staffing during the visit/program. RAs are supportive and caring graduate students who are more successful in their roles if they have high level information. RA meetings are held on Tuesdays at noon and with enough notice, you can be scheduled to meet with them as a group. If you plan to have multiple people on campus for multiple days, we want to be sure the RAs know who is in their respective buildings.

III. Checklists

A. Timeline

Item	Timeline
Confirm dates and size of program	2-6 months out
Schedule a logistics meeting	2-6 months out
Appoint an on-call staff member	2 weeks out
Assign rooms to guests	2 weeks out
Vet, select, and train hosts	2 weeks out
Send visitors policies and expectations	2-4 weeks out
Meet with RAs	2-4 weeks out
Meet with on-call RLC	Week prior
Approve registered student events	2-4 weeks out
Send schedule and program details to OSE and Security	2-4 weeks out
Send Roster to Housing	Friday prior
Check-in/confirm with other offices	Week prior

B. Other considerations to make when planning an overnight program:

☐ Have staff trained on working with minors
☐ Contact CASS office for accessibility guidance
☐ Talk to OGC about releases and medical forms
☐ Emergency preparedness
☐ Ask about allergies for food and environment
☐ Have a packing list that includes bedding
☐ Ask about a release to use the gym
☐ Develop rules for name tags on campus, place phone numbers on back
☐ Have a plan for if/when a student needs to go home or is sent home (and at what cost)
☐ Talk to students about emergency preparedness and what to do