Suriname

Family Life

A typical family has a mother, father, grandparents living in the same house in the same town. The average number of children per family is 3. In Suriname, the man is the primary financial provider and holds the most authority in the home. Meals in Suriname may be eaten all together as a family, or separately depending on family members’ schedules.

While it is important to always be respectful, many Surinamese teenagers interact informally with all of their family members.

Teen Life: According to Surinamese culture, teens always ask permission before borrowing something from friends or family members.

Some teenagers get a stipend from their parents, while some have part time jobs after school. Surinamese teenagers usually spend money on fast food, phone calling cards, and sometimes they buy clothes. Many teenagers in Suriname may not be used to managing their own finances, and may need assistance with budgeting while on program.

Responsibilities: Surinamese teenagers usually help their parents at home, washing the dishes, sweeping, and cleaning up. Most teenagers do not cook but they do know the basics of cooking.

Parental Involvement: Many Surinamese parents are in direct contact with their children’s school and are kept aware of their academic progress.

With regards to monitoring students’ computer usage, not all parents in Suriname are computer savvy, so many parents are not actively involved in this process.

Pets: It is not common for a family to have pets in the home in Suriname.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing: In school in Suriname, teenage boys and girls socialize together, but they remain separate outside of school.

Friendships: Most students in Suriname make friends at school, in the neighborhood, and through family. Friendship means a lot to Surinamese teenagers. This is not a common practice, but they do share when a friend is in need of money.

Communication Styles: Respect is very important in Suriname. Teenagers will not interact informally with their elders. In Suriname, parents are very strict and communication is very indirect and formal. Students do not typically express their own opinions to their elders. It is common to show negative emotions to their peers, but teens in Suriname will not display negative emotions to elders.

Eye Contact: Traditionally, Surinamese youth would look down when talking with elders. However, today most teenagers will make eye contact when talking, even to elders.

Cultural Norms: Surinamese households tend to be quite full, and family time is very important. Students are not accustomed to spending time alone or to pursuing individual interests.

Time and punctuality are two main problems with students from Suriname it is common for people to be late and have a flexible concept of time.
Religion: In Suriname, religious events are family and often community affairs.

Holidays: Holidays are large events in Suriname, and are precious moments of family gatherings. Students from Suriname will especially miss festivities around Christmas and New Year’s. The most common holidays in Suriname are:

- New Year (Jan 1)
- Christmas (Dec 25/26) Easter (April)
- Eid al-Fitr (Muslim)
- Phagwa (Hindu)
- Independence Day (Nov 25)
- Labor Day (May 1)
- Day of the Emancipation (July 1) – abolition of slavery

Typically in Suriname, students shower twice a day. Students are not accustomed to household chores including keeping the bathroom clean and dry.

It is common to wear a shirt and pants two days in a row without washing. Students will typically change into house clothes when returning home from an outside activity. Students from Suriname should know how to use American style washers, as they have washing machines in Suriname.