

# **DISTRICT YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY 2021-02**

## **GENERAL YOUTH PROTECTION PROVISIONS**

### **1. Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth**

The district strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

**Procedures and criteria for reporting allegations involving youth protection are set out in detail in the second half of this document.**

### **2. Definitions**

**Volunteer** — Any adult involved with Rotary youth activities who interacts directly with youth, whether supervised or unsupervised.

Rotary volunteers include:

- Club and district youth program officers and committee members
- Rotary member and nonmember counselors
- Members and nonmembers and their spouses and partners who work with students during activities or outings or who transport students to events
- Youth Exchange host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members
- List volunteer roles and descriptions applicable to your district here:

**Youth program participant** — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, regardless of age.

### **3. Legal Entity and Liability Insurance**

Youth activities are part of a legal entity known as Rotary District 5010 Youth Programs. This entity has been formed under the laws of the State of Alaska and is valid at this time. Rotary

within the United States carries liability insurance which provides coverage to the organization and volunteers from third-party liability claims and lawsuits alleging negligence by the organization, its employees, or its volunteers.

#### **4. Club Compliance**

The district governor is responsible for supervising and controlling all youth activities in the district, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange. The district will monitor all participating clubs and ensure that they comply with youth protection and Rotary Youth Exchange certification requirements.

All clubs that participate in Rotary Youth Exchange must provide the district with a copy of the following for review and approval:

- A signed compliance statement that the club is operating its program in accordance with district and RI policies
- Confirmation that volunteers will be prohibited from contact with program participants until a written application, interview, reference check, and criminal background check have been conducted and clearance for unsupervised contact with program participants has been issued
- All club materials that advertise the Youth Exchange program, including brochures, applications, policies, and websites
- Any club youth protection training materials

#### **5. Volunteer Selection and Screening**

RI has an absolute policy that RI and its constituent districts, clubs, and members shall not tolerate any form of abuse or harassment. All Rotary member and nonmember volunteers who are interested in working with youth program participants must meet RI and district eligibility requirements. RI prohibits the membership and participation of any Rotarian or non-Rotary volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been known to have engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment or other act that violates law or the accepted standard of behavior in the community. RI policy specifically requires that any person convicted of a crime

involving abuse or harassment of a minor child be immediately and permanently terminated from Rotary and any Rotary Club.

Districts will maintain confidential records of individuals prohibited from contact with youth and make sure that these prohibitions are implemented consistently throughout the district from year to year. People who are prohibited from working with youth also may not serve in any youth-related activity, including without limitation, as district Interact chair, Interact club adviser, district RYLA chair, district Youth Exchange chair, district youth protection officer, or in any other locally appointed club or district role in which they might have contact with youth.

If a person is accused of sexual abuse or harassment and law enforcement's investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, additional safeguards will be implemented as necessary to protect any youth program participants with whom the accused might have future contact, as well as the accused. A person who has been cleared of charges may apply to continue as a youth program volunteer. Such reinstatement is not a right, and reinstatement to a former position is not guaranteed.

All Rotary member and nonmember Youth Exchange volunteers who have direct, unsupervised contact with program participants must:

- Complete a volunteer application form
- Undergo a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices)
- Be interviewed, preferably in person
- For Youth Exchange host families, the interview determines suitability. It should demonstrate:
  - Commitment to the safety and security of students
  - Appropriate motives for hosting a student consistent with Rotary's ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange
    - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student
    - Ability to provide appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well-being

- Provide a list of personal references and their contact information (references may not include family members and no more than one Rotary member)
- Comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Exchange program Youth Exchange host families must also:
  - Undergo announced and unannounced home visits both before and during the placement; home visits must be conducted during each year the family participates, even for repeat host families

Note: All adult residents of the host home must meet all selection and screening guidelines. This includes adult children of the host family and other members of the extended family or household staff who are full-time or part-time residents of the home.

Youth Exchange students must be appointed a Rotary counselor who meets the criteria for all volunteers as well as the following:

- A counselor must not hold a role of authority over the student's exchange (for example, a member of a student's host family, school principal, club president, or district or club Youth Exchange officer)
- Counselors must be able to respond to any problems or concerns that may arise, including instances of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or harassment.

## **6. Participant Selection and Screening**

All students who are interested in the district Youth Exchange program must meet district guidelines and:

- Complete a written application or online
- Be interviewed by the sending club and/or district
- Attend and participate in all club and district orientation and training sessions

All parents or legal guardians of Youth Exchange participants must also be interviewed at the club or district level to determine the student's suitability to participate in the program.

## **7. Training**

The District will provide youth protection training and information on youth programs. The Youth Exchange committee or Youth Protection Officer will conduct the training sessions. The District Youth Exchange program shall provide youth protection training and information to all students and volunteers. The Youth Protection Officer, Youth Exchange committee or Club President will conduct the training sessions. The district will:

- Adapt Rotary’s Youth Protection Guide to reflect district guidelines, information on local customs and culture, and legal requirements
- Develop a schedule that specifies who will be trained, how often, and in what formats
- Conduct specialized training for those involved in Youth Exchange:
  - District governor
  - District Youth Exchange officer and committee members
  - Club Youth Exchange officer and committee members
  - Rotary counselors
  - Other Rotary members and nonmembers who participate in Youth Exchange activities, such as local tours or district events
  - Host families
  - Students (outbound and inbound)
- Maintain records of participation

## **8. Responding to Allegations**

The District takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will handle them in accordance with the District’s Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines. The district will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and official and RI investigations. The District shall appoint a youth protection officer to advise it and its clubs on abuse and harassment prevention and to help manage risks and any crises that affect the safety of youth. The youth protection officer preferably should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development, and may or may not be a Rotary member.

The district has developed a crisis management plan, which will be distributed at the beginning of each Rotary year to club officers and any persons involved with Rotary youth activities. The provisions of this crisis management plan are mandatory.

## **9. Travel by Youth**

Youth travel outside of the community must comply with RI and district youth protection policies. For all youth travel sponsored by the district or its clubs, before departure, the host district must:

- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of all youth program participants
- Give parents or legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information
- Recommended but not required: when traveling more than 150 miles, or 240 kilometers, from the home residence or out of the home country, verify that program participants have adequate insurance, including benefits for medical service, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability in amounts satisfactory to the club or district that is organizing the activity or event, with coverage from the participants' departure until their return
- In addition, for Youth Exchange travel outside of students' host communities or that is not customarily a part of the exchange program, either with their host families or to attend Rotary events, the host district shall receive authorization from the sending district in advance

## **10. District Youth Exchange Administration**

The district Youth Exchange program, in collaboration with participating clubs, must also:

- Confirm that all inbound students have at least the minimum insurance that is required by the Rotary Code of Policies (Because the host district must be able to arrange immediate and emergency medical attention when it is needed, the host district must be satisfied that the student's coverage is adequate)

- Store participant and volunteer records securely for at least seven (7) years after participation, in accordance with all applicable privacy laws
- Provide each student with a list of potentially needed local services (rape and suicide crisis hotlines; alcohol and drug awareness programs; relevant law enforcement agencies; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer services; etc.). This list must also include the following contacts:
  - For inbound students: host Rotary counselor, host club president, host district Youth Exchange chair, host district governor, and at least two nonmember resource people (one male and one female) who are not related to each other and do not have close ties to the host families or the Rotary counselor and who can help the students with any problems.
  - For outbound students: sending Rotary counselor, sending club president, sending district Youth Exchange chair, sending district governor
- Complete an annual survey reporting on program activity for RI
- Provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number to students
- Report all incidents (including abuse or harassment allegations, accidents, crimes, early returns, and death) that involve Youth Exchange students to RI staff ([youthprotection@rotary.org](mailto:youthprotection@rotary.org)) within 72 hours of learning of the incident
- Prohibit any unauthorized exchange activity, such as sending a student on exchange outside of the Rotary Youth Exchange program or outside of the district certification structure
- Develop contingency hosting plans that list prescreened families. Establish the criteria and procedures for removing a student from the host family. Arrange for temporary contingent housing in advance.
- Ensure that all hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host inbound students as a condition of sending students on an exchange.
- Have long-term program participants stay with multiple host families, if possible. It is recommended that they be placed with three host families during their exchange. If circumstances prevent multiple host family placements, the sending and the host district must agree and must inform the student's parent or legal guardian in advance. At least

one backup host family must be available.

- Request a monthly report from each inbound and outbound program participant that includes information on their current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas, and suggestions.

The district Youth Exchange committee can review the reports and assist program participants as needed.

## **ABUSE AND HARASSMENT ALLEGATION REPORTING PROVISIONS**

### **Allegation Response Plan by District 5010 Officers**

The following steps must be taken immediately after any alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer, while others should be performed by a district officer, as specified or otherwise noted.

**1. Protect the young person.** Ensure the safety and well-being of the young person by removing him or her from the reportable situation immediately and by preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for his or her safety and is not a punishment. Take immediate action to ensure the young person's health and well-being, and get him or her medical or psychological care, if appropriate.

**2. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities immediately:** Report all cases of abuse or harassment immediately, firstly to local law enforcement and child protective services for investigation and then to club and district leaders for follow-through.

Interrogations related to allegations of abuse or harassment shall not be undertaken by untrained Rotarians or volunteers and must be left entirely to law enforcement and child protective agencies.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the club president or if unavailable the Club President-Elect or Vice-President, who shall immediately report any reportable allegation to law enforcement and child protective agencies and then promptly report the incident

to, and seek advice from, the district governor and youth protection officer. District 5010 will cooperate with law enforcement and other official and RI investigations.

**3. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.** Affected Rotary clubs and District 5010 shall immediately remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved and the District Governor or designee determines whether or not the alleged perpetrator may resume participation in Rotary Youth Activities.

**4. Avoid gossip, discussion, and blame:** Do not discuss anything about an allegation with anyone other than those who need to know. Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation. District 5010 will strive to maintain the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person.

**5. Follow through:** The District Governor or the Governor's designee shall inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours and provide ongoing status reports. District 5010 will ensure that the program participant's parents or legal guardians have been notified and offer the young person an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent his or her interests.

If law enforcement or child protective agencies decline to investigate, or if any official investigation is inconclusive, the district governor shall appoint a district review committee to coordinate an independent review to ensure that district youth protection policies were followed, confirm that youth safety was the highest priority, identify lessons learned, and recommend any desirable modifications to district policies and procedures. This review is not responsible for determining the validity of any allegations; that can only be done by youth protection agency personnel or trained law enforcement professionals.

If law enforcement and/or child protective investigations determines that the alleged conduct will not be prosecuted criminally, the district governor or his/her designee will

contact the alleged offender and document and discuss all accusations of inappropriate behavior and the actions taken to resolve the situation, so that patterns of inappropriate behavior are identified, addressed, and avoided in the future.

In the event that any official investigation determines that the current allegations will not be prosecuted criminally but the District Governor finds that the alleged actions are a cause for concern regarding future behavior, then the District Governor in consultation with Rotary International may take such administrative action as he or she may deem appropriate to prevent a recurrence, including without limitation removing the person from future contact with Rotary youth activity participants and programs.

## **DISTRICT ALLEGATION REPORTING CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES**

**Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth:** The district strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. The safety and well-being of program participants must always be top priority.

**Zero tolerance for any abuse or harassment:** Rotary International and its districts are committed to protecting the safety and security of all youth program participants and will not tolerate abuse or harassment. All allegations will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with local law and the procedures below.

### **Definitions:**

**Emotional, psychological or verbal abuse:** The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assault to control the behavior of another and/or alter their perceptions and attitudes. Examples include

rejecting the person, preventing them from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements about their race, religion, abilities, intellect, tastes, or personal appearance.

**Physical abuse:** Physical contact or the credible threat of imminent physical contact that would plausibly cause pain, injury, humiliation, or other physical suffering or harm.

**Neglect:** Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical or emotional care that is important to physical and/or psychological well-being.

**Sexual abuse:** Engaging in, attempting, or otherwise attempting to arrange implicit or explicit sexual acts. This includes pressuring someone to perform a sexual act alone, or sexually engaging directly with another person of any age or gender through force or coercion, or with anyone who is unable to give consent. Any sexual activity between a legal adult and a minor or youth program participant, any activity in which one person is in a position of authority over the other, or any nonconsensual sexual activity between peers, is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also include offenses that don't include direct physical touching, such as voyeurism, indecent exposure, stalking, electronic harassment, or intentionally or negligently exposing a young person to sexually explicit or pornographic material.

**Sexual harassment:** Sexual advances, requests for sexual acts, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone who is unwilling or unable to consent or pressuring a person regarding sexual matters. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize someone or accustom them to inappropriate behavior. Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Sexual epithets or jokes, written or spoken references to sexual conduct, gossip about someone's sex life, or comments about a person's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Giving private or secret gifts, including those of a sexual nature
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Inappropriate physical contact, such as intentionally brushing against a person
- Obscene language or gestures, suggestive or insulting comments

**Grooming:** Establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive.

**Consent:** An informed, knowing, and voluntary permission for something to happen, including sexual activity.

## **Receiving a Report of Abuse or Harassment**

Any adult to whom a program participant reports abuse or harassment must:

- **Listen attentively and stay calm.** Acknowledge that it takes courage to report abuse or harassment. Be supportive, but remain neutral; do not express shock, horror, or disbelief.
- **Assure privacy but not confidentiality.** Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse or harassment to make it stop and to prevent it from happening to others.
- **Get information, but don't interrogate the participant.** Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that they did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking why questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives, implying they are at fault, or suggesting that you don't believe them. Remember that your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities. Be cautious about digging too deeply into specifics – leave that to trained personnel. Ask general questions about who, what, when, etc., not leading questions that suggest a desired answer or imply that the report is dubious or possibly contradicted.
- **Be nonjudgmental and reassuring.** Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved, even the accused, because it could be someone they care about. It is especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that it was not their fault and that they were brave and mature to come to you.
- **Be patient and understanding.** A person who has experienced trauma might find it difficult to talk about the details of their experience. Encourage them to report as much as they can or as they feel comfortable discussing. Try to minimize any need for them to explain their experience again.

- **Document the allegation.** Take confidential notes that include details such as dates and locations they reference, as soon after the report as you can. Try to use the young person's exact words.

## **Responding to an Allegation**

The following steps must be taken immediately after alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer. Others, as specified, should be performed by a district officer.

- 1. Protect the young person.** Ensure the safety and security of the young person by removing them from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for their safety and is not a punishment. Take immediate action to safeguard the young person's health and well-being, and get them medical and/or psychological care as appropriate. If both the person who reported the problem and the person who is accused are young people, provide support to both of them.
- 2. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities.** Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment — first to for investigation and then to club and district leaders. The investigation of alleged abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement and child protective agencies. All investigations must be conducted by authorities that are not affiliated with Rotary.
- 3. The primary Rotary reporting contact is the District Governor** or his or her designee, who will be the liaison with and seek guidance from the appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the District Governor, the District Youth Protection Officer should be the main Rotary contact.
- 4. Do Not Free-lance:** In accordance with the District's established crisis management plan, once a report has been made, then the district will be the sole point of contact and cooperation with all investigations and media. Stand aside at that point. Do not make statements to news media or post anything on social media. The district has expert assistance in pertinent areas on-call and already briefed and ghas researched local, state or provincial, and national laws related to youth protection, including reporting

allegations, and notes the following legal requirements, of which all volunteers must be aware.

5. If you suspect a child was abused or neglected, immediately contact the Office of Children's Services (OCS) hotline and your local law enforcement such as Alaska State Troopers and local police. As of September 1, 2020 all reports of sexual abuse should be made to both OCS and to law enforcement. You can call at any time, any day of the week.
6. The OCS hotline is open 24/7 at 1-800-478-4444 or Email: [reportchildabuse@alaska.gov](mailto:reportchildabuse@alaska.gov) or Fax: 907-269-3939
7. If you are unable to reach OCS immediately or within no later than 24 hours, you must contact the law enforcement agency responsible for your area. And again, reports of sexual abuse should be made to both OCS and to law enforcement.
8. In an emergency situation where the child is facing an immediate danger, you should call 911, or the nearest law enforcement agency, and take whatever actions you can without putting yourself at risk of harm to make the child safe until authorities take over.
9. As promptly as possible after reporting to authorities, contact and report the incident to the District Governor by cell phone and text. Ensure that the District Governor has received and has acknowledged receipt of your initial report. The current Club level crisis management plan is attached to this Youth Protection Guide and contains the most recent contact information and procedures.

**3. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.** The district will remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved. Follow district-established criteria and procedures for removing a Rotary Youth Exchange student from a host family if the student makes an allegation against a host family member. Move the student to another host family that was screened in advance.

**4. Avoid gossip, discussion, and blame.** Do not tell anyone about the allegation other than those who need to know. Take care to protect the rights of everyone who is involved, including the alleged perpetrator. Do not discuss or make statements in your club, to news media nor post

anything on social media. Doing so complicates any investigation, often causes severe long-term damage to the people involved, and may expose you to legal liability.

**5. Follow up and implement safeguards.** These are set out in greater detail above. In general, though, RI must be informed within 72 hours through a designated district officer who will provide ongoing status reports to RI. The district will also make sure that the parents or legal guardians of the participants (whether they are accused or making the accusation) have been notified. The district will refer all involved young persons to an independent, non-Rotary counselor who can provide them professional emotional support. The district governor will appoint a committee to coordinate an independent review to ensure that district youth protection policies were followed, confirm that youth safety was treated as the highest priority, determine lessons learned, and determine whether any changes to district procedures are appropriate. This review will not determine the validity of any allegations but rather will review District actions for future guidance. When the district is notified of the outcome of any official investigation by law enforcement, it will contact everyone involved in the incident. The district will document all allegations and accusations, as well as the final outcome and the actions taken to resolve the situation. Patterns of inappropriate behavior must be identified and addressed.