

Rotary District 6980
Youth Services Handbook

Section 4
District 6980 Youth Protection Protocols

Article 1 Introduction

This youth protection policy provides the principles, standards and guidelines that District 6980 Rotary Youth Services Committee considers to be essential to keep youth safe. It is a tool that our youth services committee, staff, volunteers, host families, parents, youths and others can refer to, rely upon, and be reassured will ensure consistency of behavior, a means for identifying concerns, and clear guidelines and instructions for what should happen next.

Article 2 Youth Protection Policy Principles and Protocols

- 2.010.** Safety Focused Recruitment
- 2.020.** Consistent Youth Safety Training
- 2.030.** Safe Working Practices

Effective youth protection policy is based upon three principles that are of equal importance, to wit, safety focused recruitment, consistent youth safety training, and safe working practices. One of the most important steps that District 6980 Youth Services Committee can take to prevent harm to youth is to exercise extreme care in the selection and approval of the adults who will be working with them.

These protocols define what behaviors are acceptable and expected of individuals coming into contact with the youths, provide consistency of behaviors, and allow potentially harmful behaviors to be more easily identified and managed. All individuals working with Rotary youth programs and having any contact with youths, are expected to adhere to the safe working practices. A failure or refusal to adhere to these protocols will result in suspension and/or termination from further involvement in District 6980 Rotary Youth Programs.

2.010. Safety Focused Recruitment

A robust and thorough vetting process, including national, state and local criminal background checks, youth abuse registry checks, sex offender registry checks and personal communication with character references, will be required annually for all adults having regular contact with youths in Rotary youth programs.

No individual who has ever been registered as a sex offender or sexual predator (or such other equivalent term utilized in another jurisdiction) or who has been convicted of any crime of violence or crime against a youth, or involving a youth victim, shall be permitted to serve as a member of the District 6980 Rotary Youth Services Committee, or as staff, a host parent, chaperone, a Rotary youth volunteer. Any individual who has been convicted, within the last five (5) years, of any criminal offense involving the use, possession, sale or distribution of drugs,

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whether prescription, over-the-counter or illegal, shall not be permitted to serve with Rotary youth service in any capacity.

Any committee member, staff member, host parent, chaperone or volunteer who is arrested and/or charged with any criminal offense, while serving with Rotary youth service, shall be immediately suspended from service, and shall have no contact with the youth. Suspension shall continue, until such time as all criminal matters are resolved, and the Youth Services Committee Chair, District Youth Protection Officer, and appropriate district youth programs sub-committee chairs recommend reinstatement of the individual to the district governor. The district governor will then, approve in writing, the reinstatement recommendation made by the committee.

2.020. *Consistent Youth Safety Training*

The second prong of the youth protection policy is on-going youth safety training. All members of the youth services committee, district and Rotary club leadership involved in youth exchange, staff, host families, chaperones and volunteers shall complete the youth protection training offered by the U.S. State Department, annually when renewing background checks. All individuals working with, or volunteering with, Rotary youth services shall be properly trained in identifying, addressing, reporting and/or resolving youth protection issues.

Annual trainings shall focus on identifying vulnerable youth, understanding appropriate and inappropriate responses to youth expressing concerns, developing and implementing sound youth protection policies, prompt and thorough reporting of known or suspected youth abuse to law enforcement, and exploring a deeper understanding of youth protection issues. Failure to maintain the required youth protection training will result in suspension from Rotary youth services activities.

2.030. *Safe Working Practices*

All members of the district youth services committee, district and Rotary club leadership involved in district youth programs, staff, host families, chaperones and volunteers are expected to follow safe working practices, as a central element of District 6980 Youth Services youth protection policy. These practices are critical for reducing the risk of harm to youth, while also protecting committee members, district and Rotary club leadership personnel involved in youth programs, staff, host families, chaperones, and volunteers.

Article 3 Statement of Commitment

The Rotarians and volunteers who work with youth as part of the District 6980 youth services programs are committed to the following principles:

- Preventing physical, mental or emotional abuse, and to the safety and well-being of our youth and their families.
- Acting at all times in the best interests of the youth we serve.

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- Dealing with abuse, suspected abuse or disclosure of abuse in a timely and forthright manner.
- Recognizing and respecting the family's primary role in caring for and protecting their youth, and acknowledging that in cases of suspected abuse, support for the family is important.
- Recognizing that in order for our youth protection policy to be effective, our members, staff and volunteers must be properly trained and supported.
- Ensuring that any disclosures regarding actual or suspected abuse are appropriately acknowledged, reported and/or addressed to protect the physical and emotional safety of the youth victim.
- Complying with all statutes and regulations of the United States and the State of Florida relative to youth protection.

Article 4 Definitions

In reference to District 6980 youth protection policies, procedures, and protocols the following definition of terms apply:

- *Adult* – anyone eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- *Annual Review* – the time period during which selected Youth Services Committee members review this youth protection policy and considers recommendations for modification, which upon majority vote of the members of the committee, shall be accepted.
- *Chaperone* – anyone who provides transportation and/or supervision during transportation of youth.
- *Child/Youth* – anyone under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- *Child/Youth Abuse* – the harming (whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect, or deprivation of any youth or young person.
- *District Governor* – the individual holding the office of District 6980 Governor within Rotary International, and may, when appropriate, also include the District 6980 Governor-elect (DGE).
- *Emotional Abuse* – the persistent emotional maltreatment of a youth to such an extent as to cause severe impact on the youth's emotional development.
- *Host Families* – those individuals who permit youth from other countries to reside with them in their home, for a period of time.
- *Neglect* – a persistent failure to meet a youth's basic physical, emotional, medical, dental, educational and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the youth's health or development.
- *Physical Abuse* – a non-accidental act upon a youth that results in physical harm, including, but not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating,

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biting, poisoning, strangling, or otherwise causing physical harm to the youth. Physical abuse can also include the fabrication or inducing of illness.

- *Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) Committee Members* – anyone currently serving on the District 6980 Rotary Youth Exchange Committee, and includes, at a minimum, the RYE Committee Chair, District Youth Exchange Chair, District Youth Protection Officer, Inbound Coordinator, Outbound Coordinator, and RYE Secretary. (See also *Youth Services Committee Members* below.)
- *Sexual Abuse* – forcing or enticing a youth or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrating or non-penetrating) including, but not limited to, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation, as well as non-contact acts such as involving youth in the looking at or producing sexual images, sexual activities and/or sexual behaviors. Sexual abuse will also include any youth services committee member, district or Rotary club leader involved in youth programs, staff member, chaperone, host parent or volunteer developing a sexual relationship with or “grooming” a youth. A sexual relationship between any of these individuals and a youth, will always be wrong, unequal, completely unacceptable, and not tolerated. Sexual abuse may also involve the actions of one youth toward another youth.
- *Staff* – those individuals who are employed directly by or volunteer for Rotary youth services, as well as staff and volunteers of partner organizations while they are working with youth in the care or under the supervision of Rotary District 6980 Youth Services Committee.
- *Volunteer* – anyone who provides services to, or on behalf of, the youth, or Rotary Youth Services Committee, who is not compensated for that service.
- *Youth Protection Officer* – the designated individual for reporting actual or suspected youth abuse in a timely and effective manner and is the custodian of records for all incident reports of actual or suspected youth abuse.
- *Youth Services Committee Members* – anyone serving on District 6980 Youth Services Committee or any of the sub-committees including Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE), Rotary Youth Leadership Academy (RYLA), Interact, Rotaract, or any programs that involve the interaction among youth, Rotarians, and associated volunteers.

Article 5 Youth Protection Policies and Procedures

- 5.010.** Responding to and Reporting Abuse
- 5.020.** Confidentiality and Information Sharing
- 5.030.** Photography, Video, and Images
- 5.040.** Communication with Youth Including the use of Social Media
- 5.050.** Contact Between Youth and Adults
- 5.060.** Intimate or Sexual Contact

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- 5.070.** Managing Allegations Against Board Members, Staff, Chaperones, Host Families or Volunteers
- 5.080.** Day Trips, After Hours Activities, and Overnight Events
- 5.090.** Transporting Youth
- 5.100.** First Aid, Medical Needs, and Administration of Medicine
- 5.110.** Expectations and Code of Conduct
- 5.010.** *Responding to and Reporting Abuse*

Any issues of suspected youth abuse MUST be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner that ensures the youth's safety. All incidents of suspected youth abuse shall be reported immediately to the District 6980 Youth Protection Officer. The youth protection officer will immediately take the appropriate action to inform the district governor and other personnel, as appropriate, of the suspected incident and initiate an investigation with selected members of the District 6980 Youth Protection Administration Committee.

If a youth services committee or sub-committee member, staff, chaperone, host family member, or volunteer has a youth protection concern, they should immediately direct that concern to the district youth protection officer. Any person receiving a report of suspected youth abuse, or a youth protection concern, shall within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed twenty-four (24) hours, notify the district youth protection officer who will take the appropriate reporting steps as required by Florida Law.

Notifying the district youth protection officer does NOT relieve the reporter of any obligations imposed by Florida law for reporting suspected youth abuse.

No youth services committee or sub-committee member, staff, chaperone, host family member or volunteer shall prevent or discourage anyone from reporting suspected youth abuse, nor shall anyone who reports suspected youth abuse or youth protection issues in accordance with these protocols be subjected to any retaliation for doing so.

Issues of bullying or other incidents of abusive behavior between or among youths, shall be documented and reported as any other abuse incident. All incidents involving suspected youth abuse or other youth protection issues shall be documented on the appropriate Rotary Youth Services form. The reporter shall provide detailed information, including dates, times, identification of witnesses or other individuals present, and a full description of what occurred.

When any allegation of youth abuse is made, the first priority of all concerned, will be to ensure the immediate physical and emotional safety of the youth victim.

No committee member, staff, chaperone, host family, or volunteer should act alone to investigate allegations of youth abuse but should provide a report in accordance with this policy. A youth who reports abuse should not be interrogated but should simply be supported

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in providing whatever information the youth chooses to offer. More thorough questioning of the youth should be handled by the Department of Children and Families and/or law enforcement officials.

5.020.*Confidentiality and Information Sharing*

Keeping youth safe also requires appropriate standards for the sharing of information, carefully considering the requirements of the law in this regard, and the best interests of the youth.

District 6980 Rotary Youth Services Committee personnel recognize that youth committee members, staff, chaperones, host families and volunteers must act in accordance with State and Federal law, including the Health Information Patient Privacy Act (HIPPA), in the handling of information pertaining to youth participating in the program from time to time.

Information will only be shared as needed to protect the youth, and to enable others to carry out their legitimate function. The provision of information will be restricted to those who have a need to know, in order to protect the youth or act in the youth's best interest.

Anyone requesting access to information will be required to produce valid, legal identification, proof of their relationship to the youth, an indication of the reasons for the request, and an explanation regarding who else might have access to the information.

Recorded information in the youth's files should be kept as factual as possible, and nothing should be recorded as fact, without evidence to back it up. For example, no reference should be made to an individual being the "legal guardian" of a youth unless the file contains a copy of the actual legal guardianship papers.

Information within the youth's file can only be shared with those volunteers or host families who have an approved application with Rotary Youth Services Committee. For example, in the case of Rotary Youth Exchange, a youth's file can never be used to persuade someone to serve as a host parent or to convince a Rotary Club to accept and sponsor the youth.

5.030.*Photography, Video, and Images*

Working with youth may involve the taking or recording of photographic or video images. Informed written consent from the youth's parent or legal guardian, and from the youth, if the youth is over the age of twelve (12), should be obtained prior to any images or recordings being taken of the youth. Images of youth should never be secretly obtained or obtained under such circumstances as may be construed to be secretive.

Images or recordings of youth should never be obtained of youth who are changing clothing, showering, or attending to personal hygiene. No images or recordings which might cause distress should be taken or shared without the express consent of the youth, and the youth's parent or legal guardian.

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Youth should not be exposed to inappropriate photographs, videos or movies, and care must be taken to ensure that such materials are not accessible to youth attending any Rotary youth program event. Photographs, videos or movies are considered inappropriate if they contain images that are sexually explicit, depict nudity, excessive violence, or are of an insulting, derogatory, or offensive nature, or are for the purpose of intimidating, embarrassing, humiliating, or distressing the youth viewing them, or another youth.

5.040. *Communication with Youth Including the use of Social Media*

All communication with youth needs to be carefully considered to occur in a manner that reduces the potential risk to them. Adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their communication with youth involved with Rotary Youth Exchange, and the expectations regarding these boundaries need to be firmly established to provide consistent guidance for adults.

Youth are at increased risk of abuse and exploitation when adults have the opportunity to communicate with them in a manner that is not open to casual observation by other adults. Adults should be circumspect in their communication with youth, so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives, or any behavior which could be construed as “grooming”.

Adults should have no secretive communication with youth involved with Rotary youth programs. Any personal communication between an adult and a youth should only occur with the full knowledge and approval of the youth’s parent or legal guardian. No Youth Services Committee member, staff, chaperone, or volunteer should privately use or access the social networking or social media site of the youth. Communication between the adult and the youth should not give rise to comment or speculation regarding the appropriateness of the contact.

5.050. *Contact Between Youth and Adults*

When an adult is working in a one-on-one setting with a youth, great care must be taken for the protection of the youth and the adult. Youth are more vulnerable to abuse in a one-on-one setting, and adults are more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations in a one-on-one setting. When meeting with a youth the following key points must be taken into account:

- Meetings between the adult and the youth should never take place in a remote or secluded area.
- Any time an adult is planning to meet one-on-one with a youth, the adult should inform a colleague or the youth’s parent or legal guardian about the meeting beforehand, and whenever possible have them nearby.
- If a one-on-one meeting results in the youth becoming distressed or angry, the adult should immediately complete an incident report to that effect.
- Adults should exercise caution and restraint when engaging in any physical contact with a youth.

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- Adults should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by a youth, an observer or a third party to whom the action is described.
- Adults should refrain from physical contact with youth as part of “horseplay” and should not assist a youth with self-care that the youth is capable of handling themselves.
- Adults should never touch a youth in a sexual manner, nor permit anyone else to do so in their presence, including another youth.
- Adults should be sensitive to different cultural views regarding physical touch and should always be sensitive to those differences.

Should it ever become necessary to engage in physical contact with a youth to control the youth’s behavior, adults should only do so when it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the youth, to another youth, or an adult, to prevent serious property damage, or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances.

When physical intervention is necessary, it should be undertaken in such a way as to maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned. The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behavior of the youth and the nature of the harm that may be caused. Adults should use every reasonable effort to defuse situations without the use of physical intervention.

In the event that physical intervention was necessary to address an issue with the behavior of the youth, an incident report must be immediately completed, and when appropriate, law enforcement should be notified.

5.060. *Intimate or Sexual Contact*

All adults must clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with the youth involved in Rotary youth programs. Intimate or sexual contact between a youth involved in any Rotary youth program and an adult, including but not limited to, a youth committee member, staff, chaperone, host parent, or volunteer, will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way that might lead to a sexual relationship is also unacceptable.

Any sexual activity between an adult and a youth likely constitute a criminal offense and will always be a matter for severe discipline.

Consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favor upon a youth is likewise inappropriate and unacceptable and might be considered to be “grooming” to gain the trust of the youth and manipulate the behavior of the youth toward an intimate relationship.

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5.070. *Managing Allegations Against Board Members, Staff, Chaperones, Host Families, or Volunteers*

Any allegation that a youth services committee member, staff, chaperone, host family member or volunteer has behaved in an inappropriate or unsafe manner, must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner to ensure the youth's safety.

District 6980 personnel will respond to suspicions and allegations of youth abuse by a youth services committee member, staff, chaperone, host family member, or volunteer in a manner which best provides for the youth's immediate and long term safety, and will treat suspicions and allegations against such individual with the same seriousness as suspicions and allegations against any other person.

Personnel of the district and the youth services committee will not act alone and will refer all suspected situation of youth abuse to law enforcement, the Department of Children and Families, or both.

When allegations of abuse are made, the first priority is to ensure the safety of the youth. The rights of the accused adult shall also be preserved by ensuring that the accused adult has access to legal and professional advice.

The accused adult shall be prevented from having any access to, or communication with, the youth for the duration of the investigation and/or prosecution.

District personnel recognize the stress to colleagues of the accused and will ensure that support is provided for them as well.

If law enforcement decides to undertake a criminal investigation and personnel of the district are aware that the accused adult also works with youth in another organization, either as an employee or a volunteer, the District Youth Protection Officer will ensure that the other organization is apprised of the allegations and the ongoing investigation.

5.080. *Day Trips, After Hours Activities, and Overnight Events*

Rotary youth program activities may involve overnight events, day trips, and after-hours activities, which must be adequately supervised to ensure the safety of the youth participating.

All youth must have consent to participate in these activities from a parent or legal guardian, and the parent or legal guardian should be fully informed regarding the level of supervision being provided for each activity.

The District 6980 standard is a ratio of six youth and one adult (6:1) for overnight weekend camps and a minimum ratio of eight youth and one adult (8:1) for day trips at all times. This standard ensures a minimum ratio of youth to adults (over twenty-one [21] years of age) who are providing direct supervision.

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During overnight weekend camps, Rotary youth program personnel will ensure that each cabin will have at least one adult over the age of twenty-one (21), providing supervision by staying in the cabin with the youth. No adult will share a bed with any of the youth and no adult will shower or bathe with any youth.

5.090. *Transporting Youth*

In some circumstances, youth committee members, staff, chaperones or volunteers will agree to transport youth to assist them in participating in Rotary youth programs, activities, or in emergency situations.

Adults who are using their personal vehicle to transport youth involved in Rotary youth activities, will ensure the following actions are completed:

- That they have a valid driver license recognized in Florida.
- That the vehicle is roadworthy.
- That they are appropriately insured, with a minimum of \$25,000/\$50,000 insurance.
- That the maximum capacity for seating has not been exceeded.
- That all passengers have a functional seat belt for their individual use.

Adults should not offer, or provide, transportation to a youth without approval from the youth's parent host parent, youth exchange officer (YEO), or legal guardian, unless it is an emergency situation.

A youth should never be transported in a vehicle driven by any individual who has consumed any alcohol, drugs or medications that may impair judgment or ability to drive. A youth should not be transported in a vehicle operated by another youth, unless the parents and/or legal guardians of both youth have approved the driving arrangement.

5.100. *First Aid, Medical Needs, and Administration of Medicine*

Some youth may need to have medication administered while in the care of Rotary youth program personnel. In circumstances where a youth requires regular doses of medication, a detailed health plan needs to be prepared and signed by the parent or legal guardian of the youth.

With the permission of the parents and/or legal guardians, a youth can be encouraged to manage their own medication and self-administer, however, the adult supervisors should verify that the medication has been properly taken.

All youth with chronic medical conditions, i.e., diabetes, epilepsy etc., and all youth with severe allergies, shall be required to provide an updated health plan for each event attended. The health plan must include a description of medications, including specific dosing requirements, the name and phone number of the youth's treating physician, a copy of the youth's medical insurance card, and any additional information the supervisors might need to properly care for

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the youth. All medications must be in the original prescription bottle with the name of the prescribing physician listed.

If it becomes necessary to administer emergency treatment or first aid to a youth, the parent, host parent and/or legal guardian should be immediately notified.

5.110. *Expectations and Code of Conduct*

In all organizations that work with youth, there is a need for high standards of behavior to protect youth from abuse and unreasonable risk of harm, and to protect the adults from unwarranted suspicion.

All adults coming into contact with youth who are participating in activities and events sponsored by Rotary youth programs are expected to adhere to the highest standards of conduct and shall recognize and embrace their responsibility to be a positive role model for those youth.

All Youth Services Committee members, staff, chaperones, host families, and volunteers are expected to act, and be seen to act, in the best interest of the youth at all times. They should avoid any conduct which might lead a reasonable person to question their motivations and intentions. They must accept responsibility for their own actions and behaviors and adhere to the following guidelines:

- Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behavior in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the youth under their supervision.
- No supervising adult should ever leave a youth in an unsafe situation, leave a youth without adequate supervision, or leave a youth in the care of any individual who has not had appropriate background screening and clearance to supervise youth involved in Rotary youth programs.
- No adults participating in Rotary youth programs, events, or activities shall consume alcohol or drugs before or during such events or activities, or otherwise allow themselves to be in an impaired condition while responsible for youth attending a Rotary event or activity.
- No adult participating in Rotary youth events or activities shall use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten or coerce a youth.
- No adult participating in Rotary youth activities shall form or promote a relationship with a youth that is of an intimate or sexual nature.
- No adult participating in Rotary youth activities shall wear clothing that is offensive, revealing, demeaning or provocative, or that promotes positions or opinions that are highly political or contrary to the mission of Rotary International.
- No adult participating in Rotary youth exchange activities shall expose any youth to criminal activity, moral turpitude, risky behavior, pornography, or poor judgment. All

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adults shall assume a position as a positive role model and shall adhere to the very highest standards of moral conduct.

For specific information about the Rotary International Youth Protection refer to the *Rotary International Code of Policies*, October 2019, Article 2.120., [Youth Protection](#), pp. 12 – 14; *Rotary International Code of Policies*, October 2019, Article 41.070., [Rotary Youth Exchange](#), pp. 278 – 288; and the Rotary International *Rotary Youth Protection Guide*, 775-EN-(816).

Any comments, clarifications, or suggestions for improvement should be addressed to the **Rotary District 6980 Youth Protection Officer**.