



# **ROTARY** **YOUTH PROTECTION** **GUIDE**

The Rotary Youth Protection Guide is a comprehensive guide to providing a safe and secure environment for all youth involved in Rotary programs and activities. It includes guidelines for developing, implementing, and maintaining an effective district youth protection program. Methods described in this guide can be modified to comply with local laws and should be used in combination with other locally developed training resources.

District governors, district youth protection officers, and all club and district leaders involved with Interact, RYLA, and Rotary Youth Exchange should review this guide. Districts may also apply these guidelines when working with other youth-related activities or with any vulnerable population.

The information in this publication comes in part from the efforts and experiences of Rotarians and reflects the best practices of Rotary districts. Policy references are to the Rotary Code of Policies. Any decisions made by the Rotary International Board of Directors take precedence over information in this publication.

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# 1

## AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Rotary has a long history of providing service to youth. Each year, more than 300,000 young people participate in Rotary programs like Interact, Rotary Youth Exchange, and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA). Many club and district mentoring programs, immunization efforts, job training programs, literacy projects, and other initiatives also help young people or other vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, no organization or program is invulnerable to abuse or crises. They can and do occur in even the most seemingly positive settings. Predators often seek teaching, coaching, or other positions that give them access to children and teenagers. Others who are committed to working with youth sometimes find it hard to believe that some adults will abuse the trust placed in them, so they may not notice the signs. Rotary takes youth protection very seriously, and it relies on Rotarians to foster safe environments that prevent abuse and to respond appropriately when it occurs.

### Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth

The statement of conduct provides the basic principle for Rotarians to follow when working with young people in any capacity:

**Rotary International 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 emotional abuse.**

This principle must be followed throughout Rotary, from our districts, clubs, Rotarians and other volunteers at all levels, to our materials, programming, and communications with parents and guardians.

Rotary reinforces the Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth with additional policies that set the safety of youth as our first priority. They require districts and clubs to adhere to local youth protection laws and procedures and to set expectations for responding to any concerns or allegations that arise. These policies apply to any Rotary activity or program that involves youth.

Rotary Youth Exchange policies address the additional risks that that program carries. The district certification process provides extra safeguards and promotes consistency among district partners. In order to participate in Rotary Youth Exchange, districts must demonstrate compliance with all of the certification requirements listed in the **Rotary Code of Policies** sections on Youth Protection and Youth Exchange. For more information about certification requirements, write to [youthexchange@rotary.org](mailto:youthexchange@rotary.org).

Adopting sensible procedures and following guidelines protects both program participants and volunteers and enables programs to accomplish their missions and objectives. Controls at the district level, through a district youth protection policy, and similar controls at the club level demonstrate Rotary's commitment to youth, prevent incidents of abuse or mitigate their effects, protect the long-term viability of youth programs, and strengthen the trust of participants and their families.

## THIS GUIDE USES A FEW TERMS IN SPECIALIZED WAYS:

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

For Youth Exchange, volunteers include, among others, club and district Youth Exchange officers and committee members; Rotarian counselors; Rotarians and non-Rotarians and their spouses and partners who work with students during activities or outings or who transport students to events; and host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members.

**YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANT** — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, whether child or adult

## Recognizing and Addressing Abuse and Harassment

Instances of abuse and harassment of young people can go unaddressed because adults fail to recognize them or because they're reluctant to view their friends, acquaintances, fellow volunteers, or professionals who work with young people as potential perpetrators. Youth protection depends on awareness of the possibility of abuse and harassment and vigilance in guarding against it. All Rotarians and other volunteers who work with young people should fully understand what constitutes abuse and harassment.

### DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

**Emotional or verbal abuse** — The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assaults to control the behavior of another. Examples include rejecting the person, preventing him or her from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements about his or her race, religion, ability, intellect, tastes, or personal appearance.

**Physical abuse** — Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

**Neglect** — Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical care that is necessary to well-being.

**Sexual abuse** — Engaging in or arranging implicit or explicit sexual acts, whether they are performed alone or 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 is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also include nontouching offenses, such as voyeuristic behavior, indecent exposure, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

**Sexual harassment** — Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone unwilling or unable to provide consent. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom their victims. Examples of sexual harassment include:

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

**Abusive or violent behavior by youth is a serious matter that should not be ignored. Program participants and other young people (host siblings and RYLA counselors, for example) must be held responsible for their behavior.**

## SIGNS OF ABUSE OR HARASSMENT

Rotarians, other volunteers, and parents of Rotary youth program participants should watch for physical and behavioral signs of abuse or harassment. Many of these indicators could also be considered typical adolescent behavior or an understandable reaction to family changes, cultural adjustment, or homesickness. Adults who are actively involved in the participant's daily life will be better able to observe the behavioral and physical changes that can be signs of abuse and determine whether they are.

**Physical changes:** Repeated pattern of injury or an accident for which the explanation does not make sense

**Anxiety:** Reports of high levels of anxiety; obsessive-compulsive patterns; fear of certain places, people, or activities; reluctance to be alone with a particular person; nightmares or other sleep problems

**Changes in eating habits or body image:** Distorted body image, including or resulting in eating disorders

**Depression:** Excessive crying, extreme mood swings, diminished self-esteem, self-mutilation, and suicidal gestures or attempts

**Delinquency:** Criminal behavior, conflict with authority, running away, academic problems, and drug or alcohol abuse

**Withdrawal:** Difficulties at school, unwillingness to participate in extracurricular activities, repression, poor peer relationships, or isolation

**Aggression:** Overly hostile behavior or language directed toward peers, adults, or pets

**Age-inappropriate behavior:** Sexual promiscuity or graphic knowledge of sex or sexual behavior

The behaviors that are commonly exhibited by young victims can be associated with youth discipline problems and may result in their removal from one of Rotary's programs. A young person who is seen as "difficult" may have been abused, either by an adult or by a peer. If you suspect abuse, spend time with the person to find out why their behavior has changed. In some cases, it may be beneficial to arrange for the young person to meet with a mental health professional who specializes in adolescents.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Awareness of abuse and harassment patterns can help you recognize potential problems and current or past transgressions.

The typical abuser blends into society:

- Perpetrators cannot be identified by age, economic status, community standing, race, gender, or mental capacity.
- Many abuse incidents are perpetrated by someone known to and trusted by the abused.
- Offenders can be male or female, and physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and harassment can be perpetrated against a person of either sex.
- Offenders can be other young people.

Although abuse can happen to anybody, it is not indiscriminate:

- Victims of sexual abuse are often carefully chosen and skillfully manipulated.
- Offenders may seek positions that provide that proximity to youth. Such proximity is often achieved by excluding other volunteers and gaining singular access to a potential victim.

Abuse is not always immediately apparent:

- Physical signs of abuse can heal before they're noticed, and a young person may not display common behavioral or emotional indicators.
- It is difficult for many people to believe that someone they know well may have abused a child, so they may dismiss allegations without investigating them thoroughly.

The vast majority of allegations of abuse or harassment go unreported:

- Young people tend to minimize and deny abuse, not exaggerate or over-report incidents.

- They might not tell anyone about an assault because they are convinced that they're to blame or they fear the potential consequences.
- Males are less likely to report abuse because of self-blame, social stigma, or fears that they will not be believed or will be seen to have a particular sexual orientation.
- In some cases, youth wait to report abuse until they are adults.
- Few child abusers are identified and prosecuted.

## LEADERSHIP AND POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Skilled leadership is critical to creating an environment that focuses on child safety. While youth protection is the responsibility of all adults involved in youth programs, compliance with Rotary International (RI) and district policies depends especially on the vigilance of the district governor, various district program chairs, the district youth protection officer, club presidents, and club youth program chairs. They should coordinate their efforts to raise awareness of youth safety issues and develop and implement youth protection procedures.

### District Governor

The district governor is responsible for the supervision and control of district programs, including all youth programs and activities. District chairs and other volunteers are overseen by their governors and report to them. Given the sensitive nature of youth programs, governors are encouraged to use the period between their nomination and the time they take office to learn as much as possible about the programs their district participates in.

A district governor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the district has a youth protection policy that complies with the **Rotary Code of Policies** for all youth programs including Rotary Youth Exchange; all policies should be reviewed by a local legal professional to ensure compliance with local laws
- Working with district committees to ensure policy compliance throughout the district and appropriate handling of all abuse or harassment allegations and other crises
- If necessary, intervening directly to administer youth programs, even if responsibilities have been delegated to other district and club officers
- Establishing a committee or process to closely review legal charges and convictions that, while not directly related to a youth protection violation, might otherwise disqualify a volunteer from working with youth

## District Program Chairs

Each year, the district governor should appoint or reappoint a chair for each youth program the district participates in. A program chair monitors and directs program activity at the club and district levels and serves as a resource and point of contact for clubs. One person can serve as chair for multiple years; however, having an effective succession plan is key to ensuring consistent program management.

Specifically, a district youth program chair should:

- Know all RI and district youth protection policies and program operations and ensure that district and club programs meet all policy requirements
- Assist with club training, participant screening and selection, program logistics, and risk management
- Develop an effective support system for youth, encouraging them to report and cope effectively with challenges
- Communicate with national and international contacts about program challenges and successes and serve as a liaison between clubs
- Coordinate with the district youth protection officer (or governor) to respond immediately

### EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING

District governors should plan for continuity when making committee appointments. Because of the special knowledge and experience that administering youth programs requires, it is highly recommended that districts use a leadership succession plan to draw from the expertise of experienced committee members and develop leaders within the committee. The plan should also arrange for an overlap period, so that incoming youth program chairs learn important procedures and policies from their predecessors.

and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, or crisis

- Keep the district governor informed of youth program activities

Districts are encouraged to establish committee advisory roles that give program chairs a way to continue to lend their experience and knowledge to youth activities. Such roles may or may not be officially recognized by the district.

## District Youth Protection Officer

It is strongly recommended that district governors appoint a youth protection officer to foster safe operations across all youth programs. This officer should be a resource on abuse, harassment, and other risks and crises. He or she should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development.

The youth protection officer should:

- Monitor changes in national and local laws related to youth protection, as well as any changes in RI policies, and relate them to the governor and district program chairs
- Work with the district and clubs to inform all Rotarians of their youth protection obligations
- Confirm that appropriate screening measures are conducted for all youth programs, in compliance with Rotary policies and local laws
- Direct the selection of Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers and ensure that volunteer screening is documented appropriately
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to Rotarians, other volunteers, and youth program participants and their parents
- Oversee proper handling of allegations and protect the interests of all who are involved
- Maintain records of all allegations of abuse, harassment, or other crises

Sometimes the unthinkable happens: a serious earthquake, a train collision, an act of terrorism, civil unrest, or a shooting or stabbing in a school. A youth protection officer should consider what the district would do in one of these emergencies and how it could best ensure that program participants were safe and that all necessary parties, including participants' parents or legal guardians, were notified.

## Club Presidents, Club Program Chairs, and Other Club Officers

Rotary club presidents have overall responsibility for operating and coordinating club youth activities, with the support of club committee members. A club's president and committees should:

- Know all Rotary and district youth protection policies and program operations that apply to a club's involvement, and ensure that club programs meet policy requirements
- Implement required training, screening, program logistics, and risk management procedures
- Engage regularly with youth program participants to get feedback on the programs
- Coordinate with the district youth program chair and district youth protection officer to respond immediately and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, and other crises

## Other Club Roles

The activities of Rotary clubs to foster safe environments for youth extend beyond the club president. Roles within each club vary based on program needs and a club's committee structure, but they can include club Youth Exchange officers, Rotarian counselors, Interact club advisers, and RYLA volunteers.

Strong support and effective management of youth programs throughout the club are essential to ensuring that all youth protection policies, including district procedures, RI policies, and local laws and regulations, are followed. All club-level volunteers and program officers must understand Rotary and district policies and work with their club presidents to communicate all youth protection concerns to district leaders and/or local law enforcement promptly. Those who have admitted to or been convicted of a crime related to sexual abuse or harassment are ineligible for Rotary membership — even if these crimes were committed long ago or against other adults.

### ROTARY INTERNATIONAL STAFF

Staff at the Rotary International (RI) Secretariat support districts that work with Interact, RYLA, and Rotary Youth Exchange and assist districts and clubs in youth protection matters.

The Secretariat's role includes ensuring compliance with Rotary policies, assisting districts in communicating with their partners abroad, and facilitating reports to local law enforcement.

Contact staff directly with any questions about RI policies, or for assistance with media relations, at [youthprotection@rotary.org](mailto:youthprotection@rotary.org) or +1-866-976-8279.

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## YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Each Rotary district that participates in youth programs must develop procedures and policies that comply with the **Rotary Code of Policies** and Rotary’s Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth. They include guidelines for Rotary-sponsored travel by youth (which are reviewed in detail on pages 20-21).

While your district may wish to develop one youth protection policy for all of its youth programs, keep in mind that each program has unique aspects to consider. Rotary Youth Exchange, for example, requires districts meet RI certification requirements before participating in the program. (See **Rotary Code of Policies** section on Youth Exchange.)

A youth program policy should not only cover critical youth protection procedures but also provide more general program operation guidelines, so that all volunteers and program participants fully understand expectations. District youth protection policies should address foreseeable risks. Risks associated with the program’s environment should be considered along with plans for mitigating them. Determine what Rotarians need to know to operate youth programs in accordance with RI policies, and train them accordingly.

An effective district youth protection policy includes:

- A policy statement that includes Rotary’s Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth
- Procedures for ensuring that clubs comply with district and Rotary International requirements
- Criteria and procedures for screening and selecting volunteers

- Procedures for training volunteers who work with youth
- Procedures for providing participants with a support network and resources
- A system for managing program documentation and maintaining confidential records
- Guidelines for reporting and investigating abuse and harassment allegations and confirmed incidents
- Procedures for managing crises, including a communication plan
- Policies on the storage of electronic data and volunteers’ and participants’ personally identifiable information
- Practices for managing the risks associated with youth travel

Each Rotary district is responsible for ensuring that all clubs comply with Rotary policies and local laws. Noncompliance can have serious consequences, including the termination of a club’s charter or suspension of the entire district’s program activities.

Make sure to review the Sample District Youth Protection Policy (appendix A). Policies will vary with the type and size of the youth programs and local governing laws. Thoroughly consider laws that affect program operations, and incorporate any necessary information into the district policy.

## Volunteer Selection and Screening

No volunteer screening method can eliminate the possibility of abuse and harassment, but a thorough screening process can identify applicants with a history of inappropriate conduct, deter dangerous people from applying, and address parents' concerns. The appropriate level of screening may vary with:

- The volunteer **position** and whether it has direct authority over the youth program and the well-being of participants
- The amount or **frequency of contact** with participants, from incidental or infrequent to regular or significant
- The **type of contact**, such as group interactions or unsupervised one-on-one contact

For example, Youth Exchange host families undergo a more thorough screening process than tutors who volunteer in a group setting at a local elementary school. Local laws may also require certain screening practices, like criminal background checks for volunteers involved in overnight stays. Check with a local legal authority or other youth-serving organizations to determine the standard of care that's expected in your community.

While appropriate screening measures are strongly recommended for all activities that serve youth, comprehensive screening is essential for activities that allow adults (Rotarian or non-Rotarian) significant and unsupervised contact with youth. For this reason, Rotary requires the following screening measures for Rotary Youth Exchange club or district committee members, adults living in a host family home, Rotarian counselors, and any other adults who may have the opportunity to build significant personal relationships with Youth Exchange students:

**Written application.** See Appendix C for a sample application that can be customized by your district. An application should include the applicant's contact information, personal references, a statement that the applicant has no criminal convictions or current charges related to abuse or harassment, a section that explains any past charges of abuse or harassment, a signed waiver of liability, and either a waiver for the club or district to obtain a criminal background check

or confirmation that the applicant will obtain their own. Also consider asking applicants about their expertise related to the assignment and their experience working with young people.

**Interviews.** In-person interviews should be conducted by Rotarians with professional credentials related to working with youth or experience working with Rotary's programs for youth, and they should follow an established list of relevant questions.

**Reference checks.** Reference checks can be conducted by phone or in person. Use a standard set of questions about how long and in what capacity the references have known the applicant, whether they believe the applicant is well qualified to work with youth, and whether they have any reservations about recommending the applicant to volunteer with youth programs.

It's recommended that at least three references be contacted. They should not be members of the applicant's family, and no more than one should be a Rotarian. Record the date of the conversation and a summary of the volunteer's response to each question.

**Criminal background checks and criminal record checks.** Background checks play a critical part in any youth protection policy because they deter potential offenders and detect known offenders. Many youth-serving organizations require a criminal background check for all adult volunteers who work with youth, even for programs that don't involve unsupervised access to youth.

Checks are typically administered by a government agency for a nominal fee, but they can also be administered by private companies in some areas. In some cases, local law prohibits a third party from conducting a background check on a volunteer. In such instances, it may be possible for volunteers to request background checks on themselves and provide detailed documentation to the club or district. If it is legally impossible to require criminal background checks through any means, use alternative screening and monitoring procedures. These can include increasing supervision of contact with participants, checking additional references, interviewing volunteers more thoroughly, and adding additional statements to the volunteer application regarding the applicant's work with youth programs and suitability for the volunteer role.

**Home visits.** Families that host Youth Exchange students must be visited in the home before and during an exchange. To evaluate host homes' real day-to-day conditions, some visits must be unannounced or conducted with limited advance notice.

Rotary International prohibits anyone who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment from participating in youth programs (**Rotary Code of Policies, Youth Protection section**). Each district should consider, in light of local law and practice, what other charges or convictions would disqualify a volunteer. For example, a district may exclude anyone convicted of financial impropriety from roles that give access to district funds. Districts should also closely review offenses like theft, fraud, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It's also a good idea to establish a procedure for addressing disputes over the outcomes of criminal background checks.

Volunteering in Rotary youth programs is a privilege, not a right; district and club officers have a responsibility to select only volunteers who meet established criteria. Thoroughly and regularly evaluate the suitability of adults who have significant unsupervised contact with youth, including Rotarians, Rotarians' family members, and other non-Rotarians. Adult volunteers who are unwilling to undergo screening should be excluded from Rotary youth programs.

Districts are encouraged to develop a less formal screening process for adults who will have infrequent or indirect contact with youth program participants. An example would be if a Youth Exchange student were invited to spend the night or weekend with the family of a school friend. Each district uses its judgment in authorizing such an arrangement, in accordance with local laws and practice.

## Volunteer Training

A sound youth protection policy can be rendered ineffective if volunteers are not properly trained. Design training that's specific to each program role, and include abuse and harassment and crisis prevention information in all sessions. Establish guidelines for volunteer training frequency and the documentation of training completion.

Districts should customize content to reflect their cultures, their policies, and other program specifics. It's also helpful to develop detailed descriptions of your program's key roles, such as district youth protection officer, district program chairs, and Rotarian counselors, to ensure that Rotarians and other volunteers understand their responsibilities before accepting a role and are committed to fulfilling their obligations.

## Participant Support

Participants of Rotary youth programs should have access to a support network and informational resources.

**Abuse and harassment awareness.** Young people should receive age-appropriate information that will help them recognize and resist abuse and harassment and, when necessary, feel comfortable reporting problems. Giving participants information on what to do and who to contact in an emergency will help them and their parents feel prepared.

**Support resources.** Give participants contact information for key program volunteers and local services, including rape and suicide hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs, and relevant law enforcement agencies. Establish an emergency phone line or develop a system in which someone is always available to support participants.

In Rotary Youth Exchange, districts must designate two easily accessible non-Rotarians (one male, one female) that students can approach if they feel they cannot talk to their Rotary contacts. Districts may choose to give the names of the same two non-Rotarian contacts to all exchange students. Non-Rotarian contacts could be school counselors, teachers, or former youth program participants.

Participants who report abusive or dangerous situations should always be offered independent legal assistance so they have an advocate whose sole duty is to protect their interests. They should also have access to medical care and mental health professionals if appropriate. Young people may have mixed feelings about continuing with the program, and they should not be forced to continue or to discuss an incident more than is necessary.

**Rotarian counselors.** Rotary Youth Exchange students are assigned a member of the host club to act as a counselor. The counselor should be the same gender as the participant. He or she communicates with students regularly and serves as a liaison between students and club or district leaders.

**Former students.** Recently returned Youth Exchange students (often called ROTEX) can be an excellent source of support and advice for inbound students as they adjust to their new environment and navigate their exchanges. Involve former students in your predeparture student training and inbound student orientations.

## Document Retention and Information Privacy

Districts determine how to handle and retain important youth program documentation, such as training logs, volunteer-screening records, and incident reports. Important considerations include whether documentation will be stored at the club or district level, how long it will be kept, and who will have access. Research local laws or consult a local legal adviser to set guidelines for managing and retaining documentation.

To protect privacy, give access to sensitive information only to those who need it. Districts should securely maintain all records of background checks, waivers, and screenings according to their document-retention policies and applicable local laws. Ensure that document-retention policies allow districts as much information as possible in the event that abuse or harassment is reported many years later. Local statutes of limitations should inform record retention. Critical information about any incidents should be stored carefully and shared only as required by changes in program leadership.

**Sensitive data includes participants' and volunteers' personally identifiable information, financial information, and volunteer applications and criminal background reports. Access to this information must be granted only to those who have successfully completed a thorough screening and who need the information for their roles in administering the program, such as the club Youth Exchange officer who screens host families. If your district has a website that includes participants' contact information, be sure that this section of the site is password-protected and accessible only to those in appropriate volunteer roles.**

## Incorporation and Insurance

While the top priority of youth protection is the safety and well-being of program participants, consider also implementing measures that protect volunteers and minimize their exposure to risk.

**Incorporation.** Forming a separate legal entity can protect the district, its volunteers, and the district youth programs themselves to some degree. Youth programs can be incorporated together or individually, or a formal legal entity can be established for the district or a multidistrict youth program organization. If districts decide to incorporate their youth programs separately, or incorporate a multidistrict entity, it is important for the governor or an appointed representative to serve on that legal entity's board. Rotary International has district and multidistrict incorporation policies to preserve districts' authority over these corporations and to protect their officers. If you have questions on these policies, contact your Club and District Support representative at Rotary International.

**Liability insurance.** Liability insurance protects an organization from claims and lawsuits alleging negligence by that organization, its employees, or its volunteers. Consult with a local insurance professional to determine the appropriate amount of coverage. At a minimum, this insurance should cover claims that arise from bodily injury or property damage. All U.S. Rotary clubs and districts are automatically provided with liability insurance; clubs and districts outside of the U.S. need to secure their own coverage. Regardless

of their location, Youth Exchange host families should also protect themselves by securing personal liability insurance.

**Legal documentation.** It is also recommended that Rotary youth programs require the parents or legal guardians of minors to give written permission for their children to participate. This permission offers organizations some legal protection and ensures that parents or legal guardians consent to program participation.

Multinational districts sometimes face challenges in forming a separate legal entity and purchasing general liability insurance. Although all districts are encouraged to consult local legal and insurance professionals, it is especially important for multinational districts to seek professional advice to determine how to protect all participating areas of the district.

## Travel by Youth

Rotary clubs and districts may offer youth opportunities to travel outside of their home communities. The most obvious example is a Rotary Youth Exchange. Others include a service-learning trip for Interactors or an international RYLA camp. While these experiences enrich the lives of young people, all travel has inherent risks, for both the participants and the Rotary clubs and districts that are involved.

At a minimum, organizers are required to obtain written permission from parents or legal guardians and to give them program details. Such permission is often given by email, but districts may also decide to require other documentation. When traveling more than 150 miles, or 240 kilometers, from the local home community (as determined by the district organizing the travel), youth program participants should have adequate insurance for the duration of the trip, including coverage of emergency medical care and evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability, in amounts satisfactory to the club or district that organizes the travel.

However, when youth travel is organized or administered by a foreign club or district, such as

when Rotarians in a foreign city are asked to host youth participants or arrange for their hosting, this functions as a Youth Exchange activity. These activities entail particular risks and responsibilities and must be administered through the district Youth Exchange committee, with all participating clubs and districts meeting the **Rotary Code of Policies** certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange.

## Online Safety

The internet can be a powerful tool, especially for youth programs. It can be used to promote programs, to communicate with friends and families while abroad, and even to store volunteer and participant information. It also poses a number of risks that participants should be aware of. Because technology changes rapidly, no single policy could cover the range of issues related to internet use. Each program should consider the potential risks and then develop policies to address them. Instead of focusing on specific risks, consider developing a taxonomy of types of online safety, like the one below. Consider whether internet use might compromise the safety of volunteers or participants in any of these ways:

- **Physical safety** — freedom from physical harm or danger
- **Psychological safety** — freedom from cruelty, harassment, and exposure to possibly disturbing material
- **Reputational and legal safety** — freedom from unwanted social, academic, professional, and legal consequences
- **Identity, property, and community safety** — freedom from theft of identity or property

By developing an online safety policy that specifies how to manage online data and internet use, the program can identify risks and the measures necessary to avoid them. For example, since most internet content is in the public domain, what measures could mitigate youth participants' and volunteers' reputational or legal risk? One solution is to train them in how to use social media websites and educate them on the risks of posting content that could undermine their reputation or increase their liability. It is the responsibility of those

who administer youth programs to understand local laws related to data privacy and internet use involving minors and to see that program participants abide by them.

For school-based Interact clubs, Rotarians are encouraged to adopt the school's internet or communication policies.

Emergencies are variable. A crisis may be widespread or may directly affect just one person. People may even be affected by a crisis far away or in a distant location connected to the individual. What is common to all crises is that they cause stress, disruption, and pain for those affected.

## Crisis Management

Though emergency situations are rare, youth program participants are susceptible to a variety of natural and human-caused crises. A crisis can develop when least expected and demands an immediate response, so preparation is essential. Awareness of threats to participants is necessary to evaluating potential risks and developing crisis management procedures in advance.

### TYPES OF CRISES

**Accidents.** Transportation accidents, poisoning, house fires, falls, etc., that require serious medical attention.

**Violence.** Violent physical or verbal acts that may target individuals or groups based on their gender, ethnicity, background, or associations, or can be random.

**Natural disasters.** Different regions of the world are susceptible to various natural hazards, including wildfires, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

**Political instability.** Ongoing government instability, or a sudden rebellion or revolution, can lead to riots and other violence.

**Outbreak of illness.** An epidemic is an outbreak of a contractible disease that spreads at an abnormal rate. A pandemic is an epidemic whose spread is global.

It is highly recommended that all districts have a crisis-management plan, and this is especially relevant for youth programs, given the vulnerability of their participants. Preparation helps Rotarians effectively and efficiently respond to an event, minimize its impact, reassure all who are involved, and recover. Consider the range of crises that may occur in your district, and develop procedures to address them.

**Management team.** Designate a crisis-management team composed of district leaders, club representatives, and experts who will respond quickly in an emergency. Ensure that the team members understand their responsibilities, and discuss coordination. Give the team access to all necessary data, such as participant and emergency contact information, insurance documentation, and policy documents. Everyone who works with youth programs should know whom to contact in an emergency.

**Communication.** Establish a procedure for disseminating and gathering information and status updates. Depending on the situation, it may also be necessary to immediately inform youth participants' parents or legal guardians, the district governor, law enforcement, Rotary International, embassies, and insurance companies.

**Procedures.** Establish procedures for managing foreseeable emergencies. For example, have RYLA camp administrators review fire, emergency, and other disaster response plans with their volunteers and program participants, designate disaster shelters, research which medical facilities can best provide emergency services, consider whether translation services will be needed, and research what government resources are available.

**Media communication.** It is best to designate one person to work with the media. Respond to requests promptly and provide only factual information. View interviews as an opportunity to communicate key points and convey a reassuring message. Make sure to notify RI to get assistance with any media inquiries.

**Expenses.** Coping with an emergency can entail costly, immediate expenses. Determine how crisis expenses will be paid; consider establishing a district emergency fund.

## Allegation Response and Follow-Through

Any allegation of abuse or harassment must be treated seriously. All allegations must be handled according to local laws and RI policy. Consider consulting a legal professional about the district's legal obligations and procedures for responding to allegations of abuse and harassment.

**When receiving a report of abuse or harassment, it is critical that you respond in a neutral and responsible manner.**

- Listen attentively. Be encouraging to the person making the report, and do not express strong emotions, particularly horror or disbelief, at what is being said.
- Ask questions to establish facts. Be nonjudgmental and avoid asking "why?" It may be interpreted as questioning the participant's motives.
- Document the allegation during or soon after the participant's report. Try to use the participant's exact words, and include details like the date and time of the conversation.

**Most people are not trained professionals with expertise in determining the gravity or legal implications of an allegation. No Rotarian or volunteer should ever determine whether an allegation constitutes criminal behavior; that should be left to qualified youth protection agency personnel or law enforcement professionals. After ensuring the safety of the youth involved, immediately report all allegations to the appropriate youth protection agency or law enforcement. This helps ensure an objective review of the allegation.**

**Any Rotarian or other volunteer to whom a youth program participant brings an allegation of abuse or harassment must ensure that it is properly reported.**

- Take immediate action to ensure the program participant's health and well-being, and get them medical or psychological care, if appropriate.
- Promptly report every allegation of abuse and harassment to the proper law enforcement agency (child protection, social services, or local police) for investigation. In some countries, reporting is required by law.
- Follow district policy on notifying specific Rotarians, such as the district youth protection officer and district governor, when abuse or harassment is alleged. All adult volunteers, program participants, and participants' parents or legal guardians should have their contact information.
- Until the matter is resolved, remove all youth program participants from contact with any person accused of sexual abuse or harassment.

- Report all allegations and other serious incidents, including accidents that involve hospitalizations, serious crimes, early returns, and deaths, to RI headquarters within 72 hours of learning of the incident. Prompt notification ensures proper handling of the incident or allegation in accordance with Rotary policy and can facilitate communication between partner districts. Districts should provide a report of the incident within 72 hours, even if not all incident details are confirmed.

**During an independent and thorough investigation, protect the safety of youth and the privacy of both the victim and the accused.**

- Cooperate fully with law enforcement and youth protection agencies and do not interfere with their investigation.
- Consult social service agencies to discuss local standards and resources that support program participants who report abuse or harassment. Offer the young person an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent his or her interests. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the program.
- Contact the program participant’s parents or legal guardians to inform them of the allegation and the actions being taken. Districts are encouraged to obtain written approval from the parents or legal guardians of the program participant to remain in the program, if he or she wishes to.
- At times, a program participant may be uncomfortable with conduct that may not be legally defined as harassment, and law enforcement may decline to investigate an allegation. Any unwelcome behavior of a sexual, harassing, or violent nature is inappropriate. Stop inappropriate behavior and prevent it from recurring. Document all accusations, the observations of all witnesses and other involved parties, and actions taken to resolve the situation, so that behavior patterns are identified and addressed.

- When Youth Exchange students make allegations while abroad, they and their parents or legal guardians should decide whether the students will remain on exchange or return home. If they remain, obtain written authorization from the students’ parents or legal guardians. If they return home, consult with law enforcement before making travel arrangements, because they may not approve the students’ departure from the country during a pending investigation.
- Avoid gossip and blame. Don’t tell anyone about the allegation other than those that law and district guidelines require you to tell. Avoid speculation and minimize personal opinions, all of which can interfere with police or legal investigations and violate Rotary’s Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth. Furthermore, comments made against an alleged victim or abuser could lead to a defamation claim or lawsuit.

After making an allegation, the program participant is likely to feel embarrassed or confused. He or she may become withdrawn and have mixed feelings about continuing in the program. For example, Youth Exchange participants who make an allegation may want to stay in the program but not continue their relationship with their host club. Although Rotarians and other volunteers may have trouble understanding the participant’s feelings, it is necessary to continually reassure them.

**After the investigation, it may be necessary to enhance your district’s youth protection policy to prevent recurrences.**

- A club must terminate the membership of any Rotarian who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment. Non-Rotarians who fall into this category must be permanently prohibited from working with Rotary youth program participants.

- If a law enforcement investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, the accused person may be reinstated as a program volunteer at the district's discretion. However, additional safeguards are necessary to protect both the person named in the allegation and any program participant who may have future contact with him or her.
- Additional safeguards for program volunteers can include limiting or suspending their roles, depending on the allegation's circumstances. For example, clubs or districts may allow the volunteer to participate in the program only when other volunteers can monitor their behavior and determine whether further prohibitions are appropriate. Each district should consider the local standard of care and review the practices of other youth-serving organizations in its area to determine what safeguards are necessary.
- Reinstatement is not a right and is not guaranteed. Subsequent claims of sexual abuse or harassment against the same person will prohibit him or her from working with program participants, even if criminal charges are not brought.
- The district must review the situation to confirm that youth protection and safety was the highest priority, verify compliance with all district and Rotary policies, and recommend changes to avoid future issues. This review should be performed under the oversight of the district governor and, if applicable, the district review committee.





# SAMPLE DISTRICT YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Developing and implementing an effective youth protection policy demonstrates a district's commitment to protecting Rotary youth program participants. This document provides a basic framework for a district policy for all youth programs. The sections in **blue** follow Rotary's certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange; remove these if your district is not certified to participate in Youth Exchange.

Click on the document below to customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

---

## DISTRICT \_\_\_\_ YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

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

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 emotional abuse.

### 2. Definitions

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

For Youth Exchange, volunteers include, among others, club and district Youth Exchange officers and committee members; Rotarian counselors; Rotarians and non-Rotarians and their spouses and partners who work with students during activities or outings or who transport students to events; and host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members.

**Youth program participant** — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, whether child or adult.

### 3. Incorporation and Liability Insurance

The \_\_\_\_ district/district youth program(s) \_\_\_\_ is part of a separate legal entity known as \_\_\_\_\_. This entity has been formed under the laws of the state/province/country of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ and is valid at this time.

The \_\_\_\_ district/district youth program(s) \_\_\_\_ carries liability insurance with appropriate coverage and policy limits. This policy protects the organization from third-party claims and lawsuits alleging negligence by the organization, its employees, or its volunteers.

### 4. Club Compliance

The district governor is responsible for supervision and control of all youth activities in the district, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange. 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
- List of services in the area (rape and suicide hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, relevant law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.)
- Any club youth-protection training materials

## 5. Volunteer Selection and Screening

All Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers interested in working with youth program participants must meet RI and district eligibility requirements. RI prohibits the membership and participation of any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment.

If a person is accused of sexual abuse or harassment and the law enforcement investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, additional safeguards are necessary to protect any youth program participants with whom the accused may have future contact, as well as the accused. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated as a youth program volunteer. Reinstatement is not a right, and reinstatement to his or her former position is not guaranteed.

All Youth Exchange Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers that have direct, unsupervised contact with program participants must:

- Complete a volunteer agreement form
- Undergo a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices)
- Be interviewed, preferably in person
- Provide a list of personal references with contact information (it's recommended that references include no family members and no more than one Rotarian)
- Comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Exchange program

Youth Exchange host families must also meet these selection and screening requirements:

- Undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability, demonstrating:
  - Commitment to the safety and security of students
  - Appropriate motives for hosting a student that are consistent with Rotary 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
- Complete a written application
- Undergo home visits with and without notice, both before and during the placement; home visits must be conducted annually, 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 Rotarian counselor who meets the criteria for all volunteers. Also:

- A counselor must not be a member of the student's host family. It is also recommended that counselors not hold another role of authority with respect to the student's exchange (e.g., school principal, club president, district Youth Exchange chair).
- Counselors must be able to respond to any problems or concerns that may arise, including instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment.

## 6. Participant Selection and Screening

All students interested in the District \_\_\_\_ Youth Exchange program must meet district guidelines and:

- Complete a written application
- Be interviewed at the club and district levels
- 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 for program participation.

## 7. Training

District \_\_\_\_ and member clubs may provide youth-protection training and information on youth programs. \_\_\_\_\_ will conduct the training sessions.

The District \_\_\_\_ Youth Exchange program must provide youth-protection training and information to all students and volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_ will conduct the training sessions. Specifically, District \_\_\_\_ will:

- Adapt Rotary's Youth Protection Guide to reflect district guidelines, information on local customs and culture, and legal requirements
- Develop a training schedule that specifies who will be trained, how often, and how
- 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
  - Rotarian counselors
  - Other Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Youth Exchange activities, such as local tours or district events
  - Host families
  - Students (outbound and inbound)
- Maintain records of participation to ensure compliance

## 8. Allegation Handling and Follow-Through

District \_\_\_\_ takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will handle them in accordance with the Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines.

The district will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and legal investigations and will not interfere with official investigations when conducting its own independent review.

District \_\_\_\_ may appoint a youth protection officer or district review committee to evaluate and review files, policies, and allegations regularly.

## 9. Travel by Youth

Youth travel outside of the local community must comply with youth protection policies.

For all youth travel sponsored by District \_\_\_\_ or its clubs, the following will be done before departure:

- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of program participants
- Give parents and legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information
- When traveling more than 150 miles, or 240 kilometers, from the residence, verify that program participants have adequate insurance, including benefits for medical services, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability

For the travel of Youth Exchange students outside their host communities, either with their host families or to attend Rotary events, District \_\_\_\_ shall obtain written permission from the students' parents or legal guardians.

For all other Youth Exchange student travel that is not customarily a part of the exchange program, organizers must:

- Receive authorization from District \_\_\_\_ in advance
- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians for travel outside of the local host community
- Provide parents or legal guardians details about the trip, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information

## 10. District \_\_\_\_ Youth Exchange Administration

The District \_\_\_\_ Youth Exchange program, in collaboration with participating clubs, must also:

- Confirm that all inbound students have insurance that meets or exceeds what is prescribed in the Rotary Code of Policies. District \_\_\_\_ requires:
  - *[list minimum insurance requirements]*
- Store participant and volunteer records securely at \_\_\_\_ [location] for \_\_\_\_ years after participation, in accordance with all applicable privacy laws.
- Provide each student a list of local services (rape and suicide crisis hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs, relevant law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.). This list must include the following district and club contacts:
  - For inbound students: Rotarian counselor, host club president, host district Youth Exchange chair, and host district governor
  - For outbound students: Rotarian counselor, sponsor club president, sponsor district Youth Exchange chair, sponsor district governor
- Provide each student with the names and contact information of at least two non-Rotarian 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 Rotarian counselor — who can help the students with any problems.
- Submit inbound program participants' data to RI before or shortly after the exchange begins.
- Provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number to students.
- Report all serious incidents (abuse or harassment allegations, accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to RI Youth Exchange staff within 72 hours.
- Prohibit placement of students outside of the district Youth Exchange program structure ("backdoor" exchanges).
- Establish criteria and procedures for a student's removal from the host family and arrange for contingent, temporary housing in advance.

- Develop contingency hosting plans that include prescreened families.
- Ensure that all hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host inbound students.
- Ensure that long-term program participants have multiple host families. It is recommended that long-term program participants be placed with three host families during their exchange.
- Conduct follow-up evaluations of both students and host families.
- Request a monthly report from each inbound and outbound program participant that includes information on current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. The district Youth Exchange chair can then review the reports and assist program participants as needed.

### **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL'S STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH**

Rotary International 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 emotional abuse.

*Adopted by the RI Board of Directors, November 2006*





# ABUSE AND HARASSMENT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

Click on the document below to customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

The section in **blue** follows Rotary’s certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange; remove this if your district is not certified to participate in Youth Exchange.

---

## DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_ ABUSE AND HARASSMENT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

District \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all youth program participants and will not tolerate abuse or harassment. All allegations will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines.

**The safety and well-being of program participants must always be top priority.**

### DEFINITIONS

**Emotional or verbal abuse** — The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assaults to control the behavior of another. Examples include rejecting the person, preventing him or her from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements about his or her race, religion, ability, intellect, tastes, or personal appearance.

**Physical abuse** — Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

**Neglect** — Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical care that is necessary to well-being.

**Sexual abuse** — Engaging in or arranging implicit or explicit sexual acts, whether they are performed alone or 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 is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also include nontouching offenses, such as voyeuristic behavior, indecent exposure, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

**Sexual harassment** — Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone unwilling or unable to provide consent. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom their victims.

Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Sexual epithets or jokes, written or spoken references to sexual conduct, gossip about one’s sex life, and comments about a person’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Inappropriate physical contact, such as brushing against a person
- Obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments

## RECEIVING AN ALLEGATION REPORT

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 encouraging, 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 ensure that it doesn't happen to others.

*Get the facts, but don't interrogate.* Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that he or she did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking "why" questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives. Remember that your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities.

*Be nonjudgmental and reassure.* Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It's especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that it was not his or her fault and that it was brave and mature to come to you.

*Document the allegation.* Record the conversation, including the date and time, as soon after the report as you can. Try to record the young person's exact words.

## ALLEGATION RESPONSE

The following steps must be taken immediately after 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.

### 1. Protect the young person.

Ensure the safety and well-being of the young person by removing him or her from the situation immediately and 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 necessary.

### 2. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities.

Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment — first to [designate appropriate law enforcement authority] for investigation and then to club and district leaders for follow-through. Interrogations related to allegations of abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement agencies.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is \_\_\_\_\_, who is responsible for seeking advice from and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of this Rotarian, the district governor or \_\_\_\_\_ should be the first Rotary contact.

District \_\_\_\_\_ will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

District \_\_\_\_\_ has researched local, state, and national laws related to youth protection, including reporting allegations, and notes the following legal requirements of which all volunteers must be aware:

o [list relevant points]

### **3. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.**

District \_\_\_\_\_ will remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved.

Follow established criteria and procedures for removing a Rotary Youth Exchange student from a host family if they report a problem with, or make an allegation against, a host family member. If appropriate, move the student to the temporary housing that was screened in advance.

### **4. Avoid gossip and blame.**

Don't tell anyone about the allegation other than those who need to know. Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.

District \_\_\_\_\_ maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person by enforcing the following procedures:

- *[list appropriate procedures]*

### **5. Follow through.**

A district officer must inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours and provide ongoing status reports.

District \_\_\_\_\_ 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 agencies will not investigate, or if the investigation is inconclusive, the district governor will 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, and determine any necessary modifications to district 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 has found the allegations to be noncriminal, the district governor is responsible for contacting the alleged offender. The district governor may delegate this task to a district youth protection officer or district review committee.

District \_\_\_\_\_ will document all accusations of inappropriate behavior and the actions taken to resolve the situation, so that patterns of inappropriate behavior are identified and addressed.





# SAMPLE YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Click on the document below to customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

**Note:** A local legal professional must review this form to confirm compliance with local laws.

---

## DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_ YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

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, or emotional abuse.

*This information may be provided to an outside agency that this Rotary district has retained to conduct background checks. In some cases, applicants may be asked to obtain their own background checks for review by district officials.*

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_

(If fewer than five years, list previous residences in an attachment.)

Primary phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Government identification \_\_\_\_\_

(e.g., Social Security Number, Social Insurance Number, or National ID Number):

Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

### CONSENT

I certify that all of the statements in this application and any attachments are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have not withheld any information that would affect this application unfavorably. I understand that District \_\_\_\_\_ will deny a volunteer position to anyone convicted of a crime of violence, sexual abuse or harassment, or any other crime of a sexual nature and may deny a volunteer position to anyone who has been charged with these crimes.

I give District \_\_\_\_\_ permission to verify the information on this application, including by reviewing the public records that I have provided, which are duly certified, or by searching law enforcement and other published records (including driving records and criminal background checks) in addition to contacting my former employers and the references I provided. I understand that this information will be used in part to determine my eligibility for a volunteer position. I also understand that as long as I remain a volunteer, this information may be checked again at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review my criminal history.

**WAIVER**

In consideration of my acceptance and participation in the Rotary youth program, I, to the full extent permitted by law, hereby release, defend, hold harmless, and indemnify participating Rotary clubs, Rotary districts, multidistrict organizations, and their members, officers, directors, committee members, agents, and employees, and Rotary International, its directors, officers, committee members, employees, agents, and representatives (“Indemnitees”) from any or all liability for any claim, loss, damages, liabilities, expenses, bodily injury, or death, including any such liability that may arise out of the negligence of any of the Indemnitees or may be suffered or claimed by me as a result of an investigation of, action concerning, or communication of my background in connection with this application.

I further agree to conform to the rules, regulations, and policies of Rotary International, the District \_\_\_\_\_ youth program, and its affiliates.

**I hereby confirm, represent, and warrant that I have never been convicted of or charged with a violent crime, child abuse or neglect, child pornography, child abduction, kidnapping, rape, or other sexual offense, nor have I ever been ordered by a court to receive psychiatric or psychological treatment in connection therewith.**

**If any provision of this agreement is determined to be illegal or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect. By signing this Application, I acknowledge that I have read this Application and fully understand its contents.**

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Position applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of a Rotary club?     Yes    No

If yes, indicate club name and year joined: \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS; ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)**

Current employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of employment \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of employment \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_

**ROTARY HISTORY WITH YOUTH (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS, IF NECESSARY)**

Have you held a Rotary youth program position in the past?     Yes    No

If yes, indicate below:

District \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Years: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

Club \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Event or organization: \_\_\_\_\_

**VOLUNTEER HISTORY WITH YOUTH (FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS; ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS, IF NECESSARY)**

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL REFERENCES (MAY NOT BE RELATIVES; NO MORE THAN ONE MAY BE A FORMER OR CURRENT ROTARIAN)**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

## QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

What qualifications do you have, and what preparation and training have you completed for this position?

## CRIMINAL HISTORY

1. Have you ever been charged with, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to any crimes?  Yes  No
2. Have you ever been subject to any court order (including an order from a civil, family, or criminal court) that involved sexual, physical, or verbal abuse, including but not limited to domestic violence or civil harassment injunctions or protective orders?  Yes  No

If you answered yes to either question, please explain. Also indicate the dates of the incidents and the country and province or state in which each occurred (attach a separate sheet, if needed).

### For district use only:

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE      References checked by      \_\_\_\_\_  
INITIALS

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE      References checked by      \_\_\_\_\_  
INITIALS

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE      References checked by      \_\_\_\_\_  
INITIALS





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### International Resources

**Advocates for Youth, [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)**  
**Publications** on the rights of youth and the responsibilities of youth-serving organizations

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)**  
**Abuse prevention resources** developed for youth-serving organizations

**International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, [www.ispcan.org](http://www.ispcan.org)**  
Abuse prevention resources, including **contact information for partners** in 17 countries and a searchable listing of worldwide publications

**Sexual Violence Research Initiative, [www.svri.org](http://www.svri.org)**  
**Country-specific information** and statistics on sexual violence

**UNICEF, [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)**  
Information on the protection of the rights of young people, the **Voices of Youth** initiative, which seeks to help young people learn about the issues that affect their world

**World Health Organization, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)**  
Research on sexual abuse and its prevention worldwide, including **Preventing Violence: A Guide to Implementing the Recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health**

### Country-specific Resources

#### AUSTRALIA

**Australian Institute of Family Studies, [aifs.gov.au/cfca/](http://aifs.gov.au/cfca/)**  
Links to **abuse prevention resources**

#### UNITED KINGDOM

**Keeping Children Safe, [www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)**  
**Information** on child abuse prevention, including training materials targeted to an international audience

#### UNITED STATES

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, [www.missingkids.org](http://www.missingkids.org)**  
**Publications** about protecting children and bringing perpetrators to justice

**National Center for PTSD, [www.ptsd.va.gov/public](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public)**  
Information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for parents and youth program providers on the effects of **childhood sexual abuse**

**Nonprofit Risk Management Center, [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)**  
General risk management information for nonprofits, including **resources** for volunteer-based youth-serving organizations

**WINGS Foundation, [www.wingsfound.org](http://www.wingsfound.org)**  
Local and national **resources for adult survivors** of childhood sexual abuse and their families

If you have feedback, questions, or comments about this guide, send them to:

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