

## ***Protecting Youth Program Participants***

- Statement of Conduct
- Understanding the terms
- Leadership Responsibility
- Youth Protection Procedures
- Crisis Management
- Awareness and Prevention
- Responding and Reporting

# 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 with whom they come into contact and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

# Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth (cont)

- What that means for you as a Rotary Leader in working with youth?
  - ✓ Keeping the environment physically safe for youth
  - ✓ Promoting effective risk management procedures for working with youth
  - ✓ Ensuring volunteers who are working with youth understand the expected conduct
  - ✓ Establishing the climate for an ethical organizational culture

# Understanding the Terms

- Youth program participant — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, whether they are a child or adult.
- Offender — Anyone who commits an act of abuse or harassment. Other terms used to describe offenders include predator, child abuser, child molester, or pedophile.
- Accused person — Someone alleged to have committed abuse or harassment can be called an accused person while the matter is still under investigation.

# Understanding the Terms (cont)

- Terms

- ✓ Emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse — The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assault to control the behavior of another. Examples include rejecting the person, preventing them from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements based on characteristics that include age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- ✓ Physical abuse — Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.
- ✓ Neglect — Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical or emotional care that is necessary to wellbeing.
- ✓ Consent — An informed, knowing, and voluntary decision to engage in an activity or behavior.

# Understanding the Terms (cont)

- ✓ Sexual abuse — Engaging in or arranging implicit or explicit sexual acts. This includes pressuring someone to perform a sexual act alone, or sexually engaging directly with another person of any age or gender through force or coercion, or with anyone who is unable to give consent.
- ✓ Sexual harassment — Sexual advances, requests for sexual acts, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at. It can be physical or verbal, and even occur in the form of electronic communication, such as in text messages or on social media. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize someone or accustom them to inappropriate behavior.

# Understanding the Terms (cont)

- ✓ Grooming — Establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive.
- ✓ Community grooming — Manipulating or convincing others into thinking that an offender is caring, kind, and respectable in order to cause members of the community to ignore warning signs of predatory behavior.

# Leadership Responsibility

- The Rotary Club Leadership responsible for operating and coordinating the Club's Youth Activities **must**
  - ✓ know Rotary and District youth protection policies
  - ✓ provide required training to those engaged in youth programs
  - ✓ screen volunteers
  - ✓ implement a risk management strategy (safeguards that are necessary to protect young people)
  - ✓ coordinate with district chairs and the district governor to address and report any allegations of abuse and harassment



# District Youth Protection Procedures (cont)

- Club and District policies and procedures should cover:
  - ✓ Volunteer application and screening procedures
  - ✓ Volunteer job descriptions and lists of responsibilities
  - ✓ Standards for the ratio of adults to minors needed for supervision (for example, one adult for every 10 minors)
  - ✓ Crisis management procedures that include how to handle medical and other emergencies and how to communicate with parents and legal guardians
  - ✓ Written guidelines consistent with Rotary policies on reporting and following up on allegations or incidents

# District Youth Protection Procedures (cont)

- ✓ Guidelines for reporting and investigating suspected abuse or harassment, allegations, and confirmed incidents
- ✓ A disciplinary policy for addressing individuals who exhibit inappropriate behavior
- ✓ Procedures for managing crises, including a communication plan
- ✓ Policies on how to safely store electronic data and the personal information of volunteers and participants
- ✓ Practices for managing the risks associated with participants' travel, including supervision and monitoring expectations

# Youth Protection Procedures (cont) - Selecting Volunteers

- **Written application** - An application should include:
  - ✓ The applicant's contact information
  - ✓ Personal references and contact information for them
  - ✓ A statement that the applicant has no criminal convictions or pending charges related to abuse or harassment
  - ✓ A section that explains any past charges of abuse or harassment
  - ✓ A signed waiver of liability
  - ✓ Either permission for the club or district to obtain a criminal background check or confirmation that the applicant will obtain and submit one on their own

# Youth Protection Procedures(cont)- Selecting Volunteers

- ✓ Interviews. Rotary members who have professional credentials in working with youth or experience with Rotary's youth programs should conduct in-person interviews.
- ✓ Criminal background checks and criminal record checks.

# Youth Protection Procedures (cont) - Training Volunteers

- All volunteers should learn about these topics:
  - ✓ How sexual offenders behave and how they manipulate others
  - ✓ How to recognize abuse and harassment
  - ✓ How to behave in ways that keep participants from feeling uncomfortable
  - ✓ How volunteers can protect themselves from false allegations by following guidelines for appropriate behavior
  - ✓ How to recognize grooming behavior and respond to it
  - ✓ How to report alleged or suspected abuse or harassment, or behavior that causes concern, to district leaders and RI

# Youth Protection Procedures (cont) - Monitoring & Supervision Volunteers

- Here are some key considerations:
  - ✓ Document. Keeping good records of your visits is essential. Include your arrival and departure times, who was present, and a summary of what you observed. Vary your observation or visiting schedule. It is best to conduct both planned and unplanned observations. Avoid developing patterns that can be predicted, because they may not allow you to see genuine program conditions or volunteer and youth interactions.
  - ✓ Consider the environment. Determine whether the location is suitable and safe for the activity taking place there.
  - ✓ Pay extra attention to sensitive activities. Make sure volunteers and youth are complying with policies about sensitive matters like sleeping arrangements and use of toilet or shower facilities.
  - ✓ Check for adequate adult supervision.
  - ✓ Check whether the minimum number of adults for the size of the group are present and involved

# Youth Protection Procedures (cont)

## Online Safety

- ✓ Physical safety — their freedom from physical harm or danger
- ✓ Psychological safety — their freedom from cruelty, harassment, and exposure to possibly disturbing material

# Youth Protection Procedures

## Online Safety

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.

If you're ever in doubt about whether information related to youth programs or participants is appropriate to email or post publicly, here are some guidelines to consider:

- ✓ Photos or personal information about a youth program participant should never be shared without the express permission and knowledge of their parent or legal guardian.
- ✓ Stories about and images of youth program participants should not be shared or posted until they have completed their program or activity or become legal adults.
- ✓ Never tag a minor or share their user name or handle online. This could threaten their safety by revealing their interests, including locations they visit often.



# Youth Protection Procedures for Overnight Stays

- For activities that involve overnight stays or travel outside of the local community, clubs and districts also need to:
  - ✓ Obtain written permission in advance from the parents or guardians of all participants
  - ✓ Provide parents or legal guardians, before departure, details about the trip or activity, including travel itineraries, sleeping accommodations, and the contact information of program organizers
  - ✓ Require the parent or legal guardian of each minor to provide travel insurance for the minor if they will travel more than 240 km (150 miles) away
  - ✓ Prepare a crisis management plan including:
    - handling medical & other emergencies and providing for adult support
    - procedures for communicating with parents and legal guardians
    - Develop guidelines for reporting and follow-through on allegations or incidents consistent with RI policy.

# Crisis Management

- Type of Crisis

- ✓ Accidents. Transportation crashes, poisoning, house fires, falls, etc., that require serious medical attention
- ✓ Violence. Violent physical or verbal acts that may be random or may target individuals or groups based on their gender, ethnicity, background, or associations
- ✓ 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

# Crisis Management (cont)

- Developing a Crisis Management Plan
  - ✓ 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, including how you will communicate and how you'll ensure participants are safe and accounted for. Give the team members 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

# Crisis Management (cont)

- ✓ 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, medical 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 lead to costly, immediate expenses. Determine how crisis expenses will be paid; consider establishing a district emergency fund.

# Awareness and Prevention

- ✓ Appropriate Boundaries Between Adults and Youth
- ✓ Set clear standards and policies
- ✓ Enforce those standards and policies
- ✓ Hold training often
- ✓ Make sure everyone understands their responsibilities
- ✓ Pay attention to warning signs
- ✓ Interrupt behavior that causes you concern
- ✓ Take reports of inappropriate behavior and abuse seriously

# Learn more about protecting young people with these resources

- Rotary's Youth Protection Guide
- Rotary's Youth Exchange Handbook
- Interact Guide for Rotary Club Sponsors and Advisers
- RYLA Handbook
- Rotary's Media Crisis Guide

## Rotary Code of Policies 14 March 2021

1. RI has a zero-tolerance policy against abuse and harassment.
2. All district governors-elect must complete youth protection training before the start of their term as governor, as determined by the general secretary.
3. Districts participating in any youth programs may develop and implement youth protection policies according to local customs. Districts participating in Rotary Youth Exchange must develop and implement youth protection policies as outlined in Rotary Code of Policies section 41.050. Rotary Youth Exchange.
4. Districts participating in any youth program should appoint a youth protection officer. The youth protection officer should advise clubs and the district related to abuse and harassment prevention, assist districts to manage risks and crises that impact the safety of youth, should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development, and may be a Rotarian or non-Rotarian.
5. All allegations of abuse or harassment shall be reported to RI within 72 hours of learning of the incident. Failure to report incidents to RI within 72 hours may result in suspension of the district's Youth Exchange certification. Where there is sufficient evidence that an individual, club, or district knowingly failed to report as required, the general secretary may determine whether and/or the extent to which involved parties may continue to be eligible to participate in Rotary's youth programs, or whether additional sanctions may be necessary, including but not limited to requiring the club to terminate an individual's membership.

6. Any allegation of abuse must be immediately reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency, in accordance with RI's zero-tolerance policy. All law enforcement reviews must be conducted by legal authorities that are not affiliated with Rotary.

7. In addition to reporting to law enforcement for investigation, an independent and thorough investigation must be made by the club and district into any claims of abuse or harassment including a determination for how to prevent a similar situation in the future.

8. Any person involved in Rotary against whom an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment is made must be removed from all contact with youth until the matter is resolved.

9. A club must terminate the membership of any individual who admits to, is convicted of or is otherwise known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment of youth or youth program participants. A Rotarian or non-Rotary volunteer who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise known to have engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment or other act of moral turpitude must be prohibited from working with youth in a Rotary context. A club may not grant membership to a person who is known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment. (Upon obtaining information that a club has knowingly failed to terminate the membership of such an individual, the RI Board may terminate the club for failure to comply). Rotary Code of Policies 14 March 2021



10. If an investigation into a claim of sexual abuse or harassment is inconclusive, then, for the safety of youth participants and the protection of the accused, additional safeguards must be put in place to assure the protection of any youth with whom the individual may have future contact. If there are subsequent claims of sexual abuse or harassment, the individual shall be permanently prohibited from working with youth in a Rotary context. Regardless of criminal or civil guilt, the continued presence of the adult could be detrimental to the reputation of the organization and could be harmful to youth. A person who is accused but later cleared of charges, may apply to be reinstated to participate in youth programs. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that any individual will be reinstated to a former position.

11. Districts must track all individuals prohibited from contact with youth and ensure such prohibitions are implemented consistently throughout the district from year to year.

12. Individuals prohibited from working with youth may not serve as District Interact Chair, Interact Club Adviser, District RYLA Chair, District Youth Exchange Chair, District Youth Protection Officer, or in any other locally-appointed club or district role where there may be contact with youth.