

ROTARY DISTRICT 5970 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

Rotary International is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. It is the duty of all Rotarians, Rotarian's spouses, partners, and other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and young people with whom they come into contact.

Adopted by RI Board of Directors, November 2002

District 5970 takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will ensure that each allegation is investigated thoroughly. The District will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services and legal investigations and will not interfere with other investigations when conducting its own independent reviews. Not all allegations of inappropriate behavior may be criminal; nevertheless, the youth's safety shall always be the top priority.

DEFINITIONS

Volunteer: Any adult (any person 18 years of age or older) involved with any Rotary Youth activity who has incidental interaction with youth, either supervised or unsupervised.

Certified Volunteer: A Certified Volunteer is a Volunteer who has significant interaction with youth and has been certified by the District Youth Protection Officer pursuant to procedures in paragraph entitled **Volunteer Certification and Screening** below.

Incidental Contact: Any contact with youth that is occasional, short in duration, or social in nature.

Significant Contact: Any contact with youth that is but not limited to hosting an exchange student, providing transportation, being a counselor or chaperone for an overnight or multiple day event.

Youth: Any person legally considered a child pursuant to Iowa Code Section 232.2(5), 2011. (...any person under eighteen years of age.)

Abuse: Abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse toward a youth.

Sex Abuse: Sexual abuse refers to engaging in implicit sexual acts with a youth, or forcing or encouraging a youth to engage in implicit or explicit sex acts, alone or with another person of any age, of the same sex or the opposite sex. This includes non-

touching offenses, such as, but not limited to, indecent exposure or exposing a youth to sexual or pornographic material. (See also Iowa Code Section 709.1, 2011.)

Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of it, suffered by a child as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child. (Iowa Code Section 232.68(2)(a), 2011.)

Emotional Abuse: Any mental injury to a child's intellectual or psychological capacity as evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within the child's normal range of performance and behavior as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child. (Iowa Code Section 232.68(2)(b), 2011.)

Sexual Harassment: Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This may precede sexual abuse of the youth and is used as grooming to desensitize the victim(s).

District Youth Protection Officer: Rotarian appointed by the District Governor and is responsible for coordinating background checks on volunteers involved in District Youth Service Programs. This person also oversees the implementation of the Youth Protection Policy, reporting to proper authorities, ensures the safety of the Youth and follow-up of reports.

Youth Protection Policy Compliance Committee: The District Governor may appoint a group of Rotarians to serve as member of a Youth Protection Policy Committee. The Committee, if appointed, is charged with ensuring that clubs and volunteers participating in District Youth Services Programs comply with training and background check requirements of this policy, and reviewing and recommending changes to the Youth Protection Policy at the request of the District Governor. The chair of the committee shall coordinate this responsibility with the Youth Protection Officer and report any compliance omissions to the Youth Protection Office and the District Governor.

VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION AND SCREENING

All Volunteers participating in Rotary Youth activities and having significant interaction and contact with Youth, the District Youth Protection Officer, the District Governor, the District Governor-Elect, the District Governor-Nominee must be certified. To become certified, the individual must:

- Complete and submit the *Youth Volunteer Application and Background Check Form*;
- Meet Rotary International and District eligibility requirements for working with Youth;
- Participate in District and/or Club Protection Training; and
- Understand and comply with the District Youth Protection Policy.

Background Check Process

Background checks will be done for the Child Abuse Registry, Sex Offender Registry, NCIC Criminal Background, and outstanding arrest warrants or active restraining orders. The check will be conducted in a manner that will provide the District with information concerning the suitability of the person to interact with Youth in a Rotary setting. All background checks will obtain information from a government source. Information contained in the Application and Background Check Form will be maintained by the District Youth Protection Officer.

Host Families must meet the following selection and screening requirements in addition to those listed above:

- Host families must undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability for hosting exchange students. Host families must demonstrate:
 1. Commitment to the safety and security of students.
 2. Motivation for hosting a student consistent with Rotary ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange.
 3. Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student.
 4. Ability to provide appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well-being.
- Host families must complete a written application.
- Home visits must be conducted for each family and should include announced and unannounced visits, both before and during placement. Home visits must be conducted annually, even for repeat host families.
- All adult residents of the host home must meet the selection and screening guidelines. This includes adult children of the host family and other members of the extended family who are permanent or part-time residents in the home.

Rotarian Counselors must meet the criteria for all volunteers, as well as the following:

- Counselors must not be a member of the student's host family.
- Counselors must be trained in responding to any problems or concerns that may arise during the exchange, including instances of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or harassment.

RYLA Counselors must meet the criteria for all volunteers, i.e. submit application, pass background check and complete Youth Protection Training.

Notification

The District Youth Protection Officer will provide written notice to the Club President or District Committee Chair of the club or committee from which the Volunteer Application originated, and the Volunteer Applicant that the Volunteer applicant has been accepted or declined for service as a Volunteer in a District Youth Service Program. The Volunteer submitting the application may request information as to whom to contact for explanation and how to appeal the decision.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

Upon hearing allegations, adults should not determine whether the alleged conduct constitutes sexual, physical or emotional abuse or sexual harassment. Instead, after

ensuring the safety of the student, the adult should immediately report all allegations to appropriate child protection or law enforcement authorities.

All allegations of abuse or neglect regarding youth in Rotary programs must be reported by the Rotarian to the Club Youth Protections Officer or the District Youth Protection Officer. The Club Protection Officer must report all allegations to the District Youth Protection Officer. Rotarians or volunteers may also report any allegations to law enforcement or child protection authorities. All allegations of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with these guidelines.

The Club and District will cooperate with all law enforcement, child protective services and legal investigations, and may only conduct its own independent investigation if an allegation involves Volunteers in Rotary programs and if such investigation does not interfere with other investigations.

Any Rotary Certified Volunteer or Volunteer to whom a youth reports an incident of abuse or neglect is responsible for following these *Allegation Reporting Guidelines*.

1. *Report from Youth*

a. **Listen attentively and stay calm.** Acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse or neglect. It is appropriate to listen and be encouraging. Do not express shock, horror or disbelief.

b. **Assure privacy but not confidentiality.** Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse/neglect to make it stop and to ensure that it does not happen to other youth.

c. **Get the facts, but do not interrogate.** Ask the youth questions that establish what was done and who did it. Do not ask for details, an investigation may be completed by the Rotary District and an outside agency. Reassure the youth that s/he did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking 'why' questions. Remember your responsibility is to listen to the youth and present the youth's story to the District Youth Protection Officer.

d. **Be non-judgmental and reassure the youth.** Do not be critical of anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It is especially important not to blame or criticize the youth. Your role is to listen to the Youth.

e. **Record/Document.** In conjunction with the Club Youth Protection Officer or District Youth Protection Officer, develop a written record of the conversation with the youth as soon as possible after the report as you can. Include the date and time of the conversation. Use the youth's words, and record only what has been told to you.

2. *Protect the Youth*

Ensure the safety and well-being of the youth. If feasible, remove the youth from the situation immediately and terminate all contact with the alleged perpetrator. Establish a procedure for moving a student into temporary housing in case of an allegation against the host family. Give reassurance that this is for the youth's own safety and is not a punishment.

3. *Report to District Youth Protection Officer*

Immediately report all cases of alleged abuse or neglect to the District Youth Protection Officer. You may also report any allegation of suspected abuse or neglect to law

enforcement or to child protective services. Child Abuse Hotline number in Iowa is 800-362-2178.

4. Avoid Gossip and Blame

Do not tell anyone about the report other than those required by the Guidelines. Care must be taken to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during any ensuing investigation. District 5970 maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person.

5. Do not Challenge the Alleged Offender

The adult to whom the youth reports must not contact the alleged offender. In cases where the reporter or the District Youth Protection Officer notifies law enforcement or child protective services, and either of those organizations initiates an investigation, any interrogation must be left entirely to the investigating authorities. *In cases of allegations of abuse or neglect which do not appear to rise to the level of a violation of state law, and which are not reported to law enforcement or child protective services, the District Youth Protection Officer, the District Youth Protection Committee and the District Governor are responsible for investigating, and will be in contact with the alleged offender after the youth has been moved to a safe environment. Any adult against whom an allegation of abuse or neglect is made will be removed from involvement in Rotary youth programs until the matter is concluded.*

The District Governor shall notify Rotary International within 72 hours of the reported abuse or harassment. In the absence of the District Governor, or if that officer is involved, the District Youth Protection Officer will notify Rotary International within the proscribed time.

6. Confidentiality

Care shall be taken to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation. Do not tell anyone about the report other than those required by this policy and procedure.

POST REPORT PROCEDURES

The District Youth Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that the following steps are taken immediately following the receipt of an allegation of abuse or neglect:

1. Confirm that steps have been taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the youth.
2. In those cases where the allegations made, if true, might rise to the level of a violation of state law, report the allegations to law enforcement or child protective services agency. In those cases where the allegations made, if true, might not rise to the level of a violation of state law, the District Youth Protection Officer will conduct an independent investigation of the allegations. In those cases where the allegations are reported to a law enforcement or child protective services agency, and the authorities chose not

- to conduct an investigation, the District Youth Protection Officer or their designee will conduct an independent investigation of the allegations.
3. Ensure the youth receives immediate support services. Such services may be available through the local school district, law enforcement agency or crime victim services.
 4. Offer the youth an independent, Rotarian or non-Rotarian counselor to represent the interests of the youth.
 5. Contact the youth's parents or legal guardian. If away from home, provide the Youth with the option of either staying in the country or returning home. If the Youth wishes to return home, notify the law enforcement agency investigating the accusation and so that they are given an opportunity to obtain investigative information prior to departure.
 6. Remove alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with the alleged victim and other youth participating in Rotary youth programs while investigations are conducted.
 7. Cooperate with any law enforcement or child protective services investigation.
 8. Notify Rotary International or other entities (such as the U.S. State Department) of the allegations as required by RI policy or law.
 9. After the authorities have completed their investigation, the district must follow through to make sure the situation is being addressed. Club members should not speculate or offer personal opinions that could potentially hinder any police or criminal investigations. Rotarians must not become involved in investigations.

INCONCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED ABUSE OR HARASSMENT

If an investigation into a claim of abuse or harassment is inconclusive, then for the safety of both the accused Volunteer and any youth with whom the Volunteer might come into future contact during a Youth Service Program, additional safeguards will be added:

1. Contact between the accusing Youth and Volunteer shall be permanently terminated.
2. The Youth Protection Officer shall procure the Volunteer's written consent for the Youth Protection Officer to inform the Youth Service Program Chair and parents or legal guardians of Youth with whom the Volunteer could have unsupervised contact of the allegations. If the Volunteer is unwilling to consent to writing to the dissemination of this information, he/she will be removed from further consideration as a Volunteer.
3. The Youth Protection Officer will affirmatively ensure that all documentation relating to investigations of the allegations are placed in the paper and electronic files relating to the Volunteer.
4. The Youth Protection Officer will affirmatively ensure that the need to follow additional safeguards prior to and while involving the Volunteer in District Youth Service Programs are clearly identified.
5. The Youth Protection Officer shall ensure that the parents or legal guardians of all Youth with whom the Volunteer might have an opportunity to have unsupervised contact are notified of the allegations.

6. The Youth Protection Officer shall ensure that prior to any assignment of the Volunteer for Youth Service Program notice is made to the Youth Service Program Chair.
7. The Youth Protection Officer and others with access to information about the alleged abuse shall ensure that information about the allegations and investigation is not made available to or released to individuals who do not have a need for this information.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CLUB CONCERNING ALLEGATIONS

Sharing information concerning the allegation with club members should only occur with those having a need to know. When addressing an allegation of abuse or harassment, the most important concern is the safety of the Youth. Club members should be cautioned about speculating or commenting on the matter during the investigations. Making comments about alleged victims in support of alleged abusers violates both Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth and Rotary ideals. Comments made against an alleged abuser could lead to slander or libel claim filed against Rotarians or clubs by the alleged abuser.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

District 5970 shall provide Abuse and Sexual Harassment awareness training to all persons having significant contact with Youth in Rotary sponsored programs. Training session shall be provided in accordance with the District's established training policies and guidelines. In addition, Youth participating in District Youth Service Programs shall be made aware of procedures for reporting inappropriate behavior.

Training shall be made available at District meetings and trainings and will set up online training as an alternative to in person training. Attendance and certification records will be maintained by the District Youth Protection Officer and the District Governor.

District Youth Service Program Volunteers shall attend a minimum of one training session every ____ years.

The goal of training shall be to acquaint volunteers with their responsibilities under this Youth Protection Policy. Volunteers are not expected to learn the nuances of identifying an abuser, nor are they expected to learn symptoms of child abuse or neglect. Volunteers are not to be trained to be "watch dogs."

The curriculum shall include, at a minimum:

1. A copy of the District 5970 Youth Protection Policy and procedure; and
2. A review of the components of the District 5970 Youth Protection Policy and Procedure.