

***District 5470***

Rotary District 5470 Manual of Policy and Procedure

Policy Number 3

Harassment-Free Environment at Meetings, Events, or Activities

& Prevention and Response Guidance

Approved by the District Board of Directors: TBD

**Statement of District Harassment Policy History:**

Rotary District 5470 has had an understanding, and expectation that all Rotarians conduct themselves within the spirit and wisdom of the Rotary FOUR-WAY Test. This policy specifically addresses the conduct of Rotarians regarding harassment.

**Purpose:**

To establish policy regarding creating Harassment-free Environment at Meetings, Events, or Activities and outline prevention steps and response to harassment situations.

**Policy:**

District 5470’s policy follows and adheres to Rotary International's policy on harassment, approved by the Board of Directors in 2019, [**Rotary Code of Policies**](https://my.rotary.org/document/rotary-code-policies). Article 26.120. **Harassment-free Environment at Meetings, Events, or Activities** and the Rotary E-Learning course on the prevention and response to harassment situations.

**Harassment Definition.**

District 5470 is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of harassment. Harassment is broadly defined as any conduct, verbal or physical, that denigrates, insults, or offends a person or group based on any characteristic (age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity).

All members and individuals attending or participating in Rotary meetings, events, or activities should expect an environment free of harassment and shall help maintain an environment that promotes safety, courtesy, dignity, and respect to all. **Adults who work with youth are subject to policies outlined in the Rotary Code of Policies 2.120**.

**General Reporting Guidance.**

All allegations of criminal activity should be referred to appropriate local law enforcement authorities.

The club board, and district leadership shall promptly address allegations of harassment and shall not retaliate against those making the allegation.

At the club level, allegations of harassment at Rotary meetings, events, or activities shall be reviewed by the club board and responded to within a reasonable time frame, typically one month. If the alleged offender is a member of the club board, he or she must recuse himself or herself from the discussion. The review and/or investigation shall be dependent on the circumstances including the severity and pervasiveness of the behavior. Concerns that allegations of harassment were not adequately addressed by the club may be referred with appropriate documentation to the district governor.

At the district level, allegations of harassment at Rotary events or activities shall be reviewed by the governor, or a committee appointed by the governor for this purpose, and responded to within a reasonable time frame, typically one month. If the district governor is the alleged offender, the immediate past district governor (or most recent past governor), directly or by appointment of a committee for this purpose, shall review and respond to the allegation. The general secretary shall be informed within two weeks of any allegations of harassment by district governors, governors-elect, and governors-nominee. The review and/or investigation shall be dependent on the circumstances including the severity and pervasiveness of the behavior. Concerns that allegations of harassment were not adequately addressed by the district may be referred with appropriate documentation to the RI director.

Club, and District leaders must report severe and pervasive harassment and any resulting membership terminations to the general secretary. If a club or district fails to adequately address findings of harassment, the RI director shall notify the RI Board for appropriate action. Such action may include club termination or other appropriate sanctions.

**Creating a harassment-free environment.**

District leaders, including governors, assistant governors, and committee chairs, are encouraged to work with their clubs to create a harassment-free environment. District leaders should also work with their clubs to establish a code of conduct and policies for how to address and prevent harassment within their clubs, among their members, and with other participants in Rotary.

Making sure that District events and activities, and club meetings and social events are free from harassment is the responsibility of all Rotarians. District leaders, including governors, assistant governors, and committee chairs, must work with their clubs to maintain an environment that promotes safety, courtesy, dignity, and respect for all.

Here are some steps you can take to create a harassment-free atmosphere:

1. Club leaders should discuss Rotary's policy on creating an environment free of harassment at a club board meeting and determine how you want to talk about it with members.
2. Talk about the policy at your club assembly. Before starting the discussion, set a list of rules that everyone agrees on to guide what could be an uncomfortable discussion. Some possible rules: talk about your own experiences and feelings, ask questions in a way to help you understand, and have only one person speak at a time.
3. Club leaders should acknowledge any instances in the past that would have qualified as harassment and make it clear that such behavior will not be accepted.
4. Members should feel empowered to stand up to harassment when it's occurring and report it to law enforcement officials or to club or district leaders if necessary.
5. Club leaders should tell members how club or district leaders will respond to reports of harassment. Club leaders should tell members how club or district leaders will respond to reports of harassment.
6. Reiterate that it is everyone's responsibility to create a harassment-free environment. Rotary's founding ideal of bringing together leaders of different backgrounds in order to improve their communities can be accomplished only in a safe, harassment-free environment.
7. Club and district leaders should emphasize the message that Rotary will not tolerate harassment.

**Prevention and General Guidance on addressing an allegation**

The club board, and district leaders, must promptly address any allegation of harassment and must not retaliate against the person who made it.

The District strongly encourages clubs to form committees to address these kinds of allegations when required. Assistant Governors should work with their clubs to establish a code of conduct and policies for preventing and addressing harassment within clubs, among members, and with other Rotary participants. These policies should list the consequences if harassment is found but does not constitute criminal activity, and they should specify when contact with young people should be restricted. If sexual harassment is found, contact with youths is prohibited. Having a transparent process will help clubs and districts prevent harassment.

All allegations of criminal behavior must be referred to local law enforcement officials. Members should always cooperate fully with any investigation and should not interfere. Nobody who was directly involved in an incident or behavior that is reported should participate in investigating it or making decisions about it. Nor should their friends.

**A member's responsibility**

Creating a harassment-free environment is everyone's responsibility. If you see something that appears to be harassment, let the person know that those actions are not in line with Rotary's policies. Talk about your concerns with club or district leaders. Silently watching without acting suggests that the behavior is acceptable.

**A club board's responsibility**

An allegation of harassment at a Rotary event or activity must be reviewed by the club board or the committee appointed for this purpose. The board or committee must respond within a reasonable time, typically one month.

If a member of the club board is the subject of the complaint, they should not participate in the discussion.

If you have reported harassment to your club leaders and feel that the club board or committee has not addressed it adequately, report the behavior to your district governor or the district committee that handles harassment allegations.

**A district leaders’ responsibility.**

An allegation of harassment at a Rotary event or activity must be reviewed by the governor or the committee appointed by the governor for this purpose. The governor or committee must respond within a reasonable time, typically one month.

If the district governor is the subject of the complaint, the immediate past district governor or the committee will review and respond to the complaint. If an allegation is made against a governor, governor-elect, or governor-nominee, you must also contact your Club and District Support representative.

If any district leaders are the subject of the complaint, they should not participate in the discussion.

If you have reported harassment to your district governor, past district governor, or the committee and feel that they have not addressed it adequately, report the behavior to the RI director.

**District Mandated Steps to handle reports of harassment.**

It is imperative that Club and District Leadership take all allegations of harassment seriously every time. It is imperative Rotary club meetings and Rotary events should be places where everyone feels comfortable and safe.

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1. **Acknowledge every report with respect.** Tell the person who reports an incident that Rotary does not tolerate harassment. Discuss what action could be taken next and let them decide if they want to pursue an investigation.
2. **Report the allegation to the appropriate person or committee.** Clubs and districts should also create committees to handle these types of allegations. This helps ensure that complaints will be handled fairly and quickly. If your club doesn't have a committee, contact the club president or district governor
3. **Remove the accused person from youth activities.** To protect everyone, and in accordance with Rotary's youth protection policies, anyone accused of sexual abuse or harassment must be removed from contact with youths until the matter is resolved. This step may help protect young people and protect the person from future allegations.
4. **Review the complaint and determine who to interview.** Review the complaint and decide who you want to speak with. Arrange interviews with everyone involved in the situation. The best thing to do is to talk to the person making the complaint, the subject of that complaint, and other people who may have witnessed the event and might be able to provide perspective. If someone refuses to be interviewed or will not return your calls or emails, note that in your report. Try to contact the person at least three times using two different methods. The interviews can be conducted in person, by phone, or in an online meeting. Be sure to take careful notes regardless of how you conduct the interviews
5. **Conduct a thorough investigation.**
6. Start by talking to the person who made the allegation. Ask:
7. What happened?
8. Who might have witnessed what happened?
9. What outcome they want (for example, action by the district)?
10. Then talk to the subject of the complaint, telling them that an allegation has been made. Ask them to describe what happened. Request the names of possible witnesses to the event or behavior and any documentation or evidence they have to suggest the event did not take place as alleged.
11. Use a similar approach with witnesses. Ask questions that establish facts and avoid "why" questions that can lead to shaming or blaming the person who made the allegation.
12. It's best to talk to people who directly saw what occurred. This will lead you to a stronger conclusion. If you talk only to the person who made the complaint and the subject of it, they will likely offer different — if not opposite — descriptions.
13. If there are no witnesses, talk to both people involved and determine as well as you can whose testimony is more believable and what is most likely to have occurred. This is very difficult, and it's one reason why it's best to have a committee, not an individual, make this determination.
14. **Write a summary of the incident, including any action you recommend.** When you've finished your interviews, write a report with conclusions. Based on those conclusions, determine if further action is necessary to keep anyone safe. This might include terminating someone from Rotary, asking them to resign from a role, or preventing them from taking part in youth-related activities. Follow through with your recommendations and do what is needed to make sure the behavior does not happen again. This might include mediating a discussion between the parties or creating written club norms.

Keep the investigation's findings on file with the district. If the district determines that a person should be prohibited from working with youths, or if policy requires such a prohibition or termination of membership, notify Rotary International.

1. **Terminate the person's club membership.** 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. Any member terminated due to harassment must be reported to Club and District Support staff.

A non-Rotarian who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment must be prohibited from participating in Rotary activities with young people. A club may not grant membership to a person known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment.

If the RI Board learns that a club has knowingly failed to terminate the membership of such a Rotarian, it can act to terminate the Rotarian’s membership as well as the club’s charter.

**Creating a review committee.**

District 5470 recommends you have a committee, rather than an individual, review allegations of harassment and decide whether any action needs to be taken. Having a standing committee formed before any allegations need to be considered creates a transparent process. At the club level, a committee could be just three people, while a district committee might be three to five people. When you select people for this committee, look for members and nonmembers who:

1. Have experience dealing with allegations in their professions, such as police officers, social workers, or mental health counselors.

2. Are dedicated to creating a harassment-free environment.

3. Are committed to providing an objective review.

4. If people are willing to serve on the committee, but don't feel prepared to review allegations of harassment, consider inviting experts in the subject or local law enforcement officials to speak and offer their best practices.

After your committee is formed and trained, remember to tell all club members and district leaders about it and how it works.

**Summary**

Rotary is founded on the principal of all peoples joining together in a common bond for good and service to our communities and the world. It is every Rotarian’s responsibility to follow the ROTARY FOUR-WAY Test and treat all people with respect and dignity in all areas of Rotary life. This policy outlines specific definitions and guidance that governs a Rotarians’ response and steps club and district leadership will take to prevent and respond to harassment situations.

Signed 5470 District Governor

David Wood