

ROTARIANS CAN SET STANDARD FOR YOUTH PROTECTION

Rotary's commitment to working with young people is a tradition almost as old as the organization itself. Whether through programs like Youth Exchange, Interact, or RYLA or through tutoring or mentoring projects in the schools, the vast majority of Rotary clubs engage in some type of effort to help young people.

To ensure that Rotarians set and adhere to the highest standards in their youth-related programs and projects, the RI Board adopted a Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth in 2002.

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, Rotarians' 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.

Most Rotarians who work with children and teenagers are so focused on helping these young people that they find it hard to believe that anyone, especially Rotarians, would abuse such a trust. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Research shows that child sex offenders seek opportunities for access to children and teenagers through youth organizations that do not have strong screening and protection practices. To ensure that such people do not use Rotary in this way, RI has created guidelines to help clubs and districts develop and implement effective policies for youth protection. Materials have been produced for Youth Exchange with the assistance of experts in the field of abuse and harassment prevention, and districts are using these to develop local policies.

We encourage Rotarians to use these guidelines while working with youth in any capacity and to share them with other community organizations that sponsor youth programs. Just as Rotarians set the standard for ethical behavior in the workplace, Rotary-sponsored youth programs can serve as the model of abuse prevention and protection.

Ed Futa
General Secretary
Rotary International

Source: Rotary World – April 2006