

Rotary Youth Exchange

Quick Start Guide

for Participating Clubs

Program Organization

As with several other Rotary programs, Rotary Youth Exchange is a District to District Program, but club participation is essential to operate this program. District Committees operate the program in partnership with participating district Rotary Clubs. The following is a guide for clubs getting started in the program.

Club Organization for Youth Exchange Participation

Recommended Club Youth Exchange Committee Composition

- Club RYE Chair (= Club Youth Exchange Officer – Club YEO)
- Rotary Counselor for Inbound (if club is hosting) – Must not be a member of the Host Family
- Local Coordinator for Inbound Students
- Rotary Counselor for Outbound Student (if club is sponsoring an outbound student)
- Rotary Counselor for Short Term Students
- While it is possible for one Rotary volunteer to handle a club's responsibilities in managing a modest program, to share the work, responsibility and the rewards, it is strongly recommended that club youth exchange committees contain at least five members
- Both RI and the US State Department require that all volunteers in this program be oriented and that all who have unsupervised contact with students be background checked. Application forms for volunteering to work in the RYE Program are furnished by the district. However, although arranged by the district committee, background checks are conducted by an independent agency.

Responsibilities of the Club YEO

- As with other Rotary Club committee chairs, the Club YEO chairs his/her committee and leads the committee in planning, setting goals and accomplishing the tasks needed. In particular, he/she organizes the committee to select and orient host families, etc.
- In the RYE program, the Club YEO normally serves as the club contact person to work with the district RYE committee to operate the program. It is his/her responsibility to forward records required by regulatory agencies (RI & DOS) and to secure assistance from the District RYE Committee as needed. He/she works with the District RYE Committee to manage the program and is in frequent contact with the district chair (YEO).
- State Department rules prohibit serving as Club YEO and at the same time as a host parent.

Sponsoring a Long Term (School Year) Outbound Student

Responsibilities of the Rotary Counselor for an Outbound Student

- A Rotary Counselor is needed for each outbound student. The Outbound Rotary Counselor is responsible for assisting an outbound applicant in preparing his/her application including furnishing sponsor club information needed for the application. He/she also assists the student with contacts with the district RYE committee as necessary.
- The outbound Rotary counselor makes arrangements for his/her student to be interviewed by the club RYE committee to evaluate suitability for the program. If approved by the committee, then the club YEO would sign the application and recommend endorsement by the club president. The counselor would assist with the mechanics. Outbound applicants must also be interviewed and oriented at the district level and approved by the District Youth Exchange Committee.
- The outbound Rotary counselor serves as his/her student's contact with the sponsor club, arranging for one or more club visits prior to departure and as correspondent for the club with the student while he/she is on their exchange, often reading letters and/or reports from the student to the club.
- The outbound counselor also arranges for a few (usually 3-5) club banners for their student to take to their host district for presentation to the host club, host families and to appropriate district representatives (such as the host district chairman and district governor).
- State Department rules prohibit serving both as Counselor and host parent for a student.

Budget for Sponsoring an Outbound Student

- There is little or no expense in sponsoring an outbound student although \$100 or so might be set aside if a sponsor club wishes to provide their outbound student with a modest "going away gift" or perhaps sending a token gift to the host club.
- It is not recommended that sponsor clubs pay any part of the cost of a student's participation in the RYE program. This program is half or less than the cost of profit making exchange programs, and taking into consideration the value of the club allowance and other considerations, the cost to parents is little more than would be encountered in keeping their student at home.

***Hosting a Long Term (School Year) Inbound Student**

Responsibilities of the Rotary Counselor for an Inbound Student

- A Rotary Counselor is needed for each inbound student. Although host families change, the Counselor serves all year as the student's advocate, assisting in a variety of matters, everything from enrolling the student in school, to arranging a bank account, to guiding the student in following Rotary requirements regarding behavior. However, he/she also represents host families regarding any issue that a host family might have with their student.
- A Local Coordinator is needed to select and interview host families and to insure the welfare of inbound students. The Rotary Counselor may also serve as the Local Coordinator provided they pass an online exam regarding the regulations of the USA State Department Exchange Visitor Program.
- The Inbound Rotary Counselor also serves as liaison between the student and the club and as an alternate "Club Contact" for the District Youth Exchange Committee when the Club YEO is not available, or when this particular duty has been assigned to the counselor. He/she makes the necessary arrangements (including transportation) for his/her student's participation in club and district Rotary activities, including attendance at regular Rotary meetings as well as required district meetings for inbound students such as inbound orientation.
- The Counselor is also responsible for enrolling the student in school, for setting up a bank account for the student, for obtaining an identity card from the State Department of Public Safety, for supervising his/her travel, and for coordinating and physically moving the student from one host family to another. (A host family should not move their student to the next family.) Indeed, the Counselor is the host club's representative in all matters related to the student – a very key appointment.

Host Families

- Two to four host families are needed for a student. (Three is considered ideal)
- If a club begins a hosting year with only one host family, then work should begin immediately to select at least one more family.
- All host families must be interviewed in their home and the home must be inspected to verify appropriate accommodations for the student.
- All host families must be fully vetted and oriented before the student moves in.
- As with Rotary volunteers, application forms for serving as a host family are furnished by the district and background checks are conducted by an independent agency.

Budget for Hosting an Inbound Student

- Clubs should budget \$1100 to \$1300 to host one student for one school year. This includes an allowance for the student of \$100 per month for 10 months and a small amount for incidental expenses.

Records and Reports

- Regulatory agencies including the USA State Department require the District to keep certain records of compliance with requirements. The district program is audited annually to verify compliance. Noncompliance will result in a reprimand and significant noncompliance will result in cancellation of the district program.
- Verification of compliance with some requirements such as in-home interviews of host families are forwarded by host clubs to the district chairman. Simple interactive forms are furnished by the district for reporting such activities.
- Records are kept at the district level. However, host clubs will want to keep some records of their participation.

Calendar for Preparation and Management

- Because negotiations for exchanges begin at least one calendar year before the exchange year, it is best if clubs make a commitment to hosting 12 months in advance of the hosting year. If this is not possible, then their decision to host should be made as soon as club officers for the hosting year have been selected, usually by the end of November prior to the hosting year.
- The district committee conducts a survey 6-12 months prior to the hosting year to determine which clubs are committed to hosting during the following Rotary Year. The results of this survey are used to make exchange agreements with districts in other countries.
- Even if a club makes a commitment to host late in the Rotary Year prior to the hosting year, students are usually available. However, accommodating gender, background and home country requests are more difficult late in the year prior to hosting.
- Inbound student applications are normally forwarded on to host clubs as early as February of the year prior to hosting, but sometimes as late as May, depending on when the applications are received from the sponsor district. An effort is made to accommodate club requirements regarding gender and language ability, but it is difficult to match a nationality or ethnic interest in a particular year. Unless requested otherwise, over time (several hosting years) an effort is made to send students from a variety of home countries to improve the cultural impact of hosting in a particular community.

*Detailed handbooks are available from the District RYE Committee to assist clubs in hosting Rotary Youth Exchange Students.

Participating in the Short Term (STEP) Program

(3-4 Weeks in Summer)

The Way STEP Works

- Students submit applications for short term exchanges to a sponsor club and are selected in a manner analogous to the process for long term exchanges. Sometimes students submit applications directly to the district committee. In such cases, applications are still referred to the sponsor club for review.
- Students selected for this program are matched by the district committee with a specific student in another country.
- Matched students exchange visits of 3-4 weeks in summer. Exchange schedules are arranged by the district committee with consideration for individual family commitments whenever possible.
- Arrangements and matches are organized by the District RYE Committee
- Sponsor clubs interview families of local students and inspect accommodations for visiting student.
- Families of participating students must make application to host the matched student, be background checked and oriented.
- The District Committee arranges background checks and conducts orientation for both students and host families.
- Outbound short term students are interviewed for program suitability, and if approved, are oriented by the District Committee.
- To be selected for this program, applicants must be endorsed by a sponsor Rotary Club and approved by the District RYE Committee.
- Participants in this program are usually presented at a meeting of sponsor Rotary Clubs, but usually are not expected to make a presentation.

Budget for Participating in the Short Term Program

- There is little or no expense in participating in the short term program although \$50 or so might be set aside if a sponsor club wishes to provide their outbound student with a modest "going away gift" or perhaps sending a token gift to the host club.
- Families of participating students are expected to pay all costs for their student, including, but not limited to transportation and required insurance. The district committee oversees all particulars of this program.

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