

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
District 7010 POLICY FOR PREVENTION OF ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

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Introduction

Rotary Clubs place great emphasis on their work with people in the community, including children, young people, and other vulnerable persons through Rotary’s many programs including Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (“RYLA”), Interact clubs, mentoring programs and Rotary International Youth Exchange (“Youth Exchange”). This volunteer effort is vital to the quality of life in our communities and to the good reputation of Rotary and Rotarians. For this exemplary work to continue, it is important that our Rotary Clubs protect the interests of everyone involved, and create and maintain a safe and respectful environment for all participants in Rotary programs, activities or events.

Special emphasis is placed on the prevention of sexual abuse and harassment of participants in Youth Exchange, and the policy has been amended to comply with Rotary International requirements in that regard.

Rotarians, their families, and non-Rotarian volunteers are expected to use their best efforts to safeguard the welfare and prevent the physical or emotional abuse or harassment, or sexual abuse or harassment of every young or vulnerable person with whom they come into contact in connection with any Rotary program, activity or event.

Rotary International District 7010 (the “District”) is committed to protecting the safety and well being of all our program participants and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with the Rotary International District 7010 Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines (the “Guidelines”) that are attached as Schedule “A” to this Policy. The Guidelines will also assist in ensuring that an adult against whom an allegation is made is treated fairly, since an allegation of abuse or harassment does not necessarily mean that abuse or harassment actually occurred. *Nonetheless, whenever an allegation is made, the safety and well-being of youth or vulnerable persons should always be the first priority.*

Scope

This Policy applies directly to all Rotarians and volunteers in District programs, activities or events involving youth or vulnerable persons, including all host families and Club counsellors in Youth Exchange programs and leaders in RYLA or Interact clubs. This Policy also applies to all adults over the age of 18 years who are ordinarily resident in homes in which a Youth Exchange student is residing.

Furthermore, each club that belongs to the District is asked to follow the “Recommendations to Clubs” that are attached as Schedule “B” to this Policy. This includes adopting this Policy, either directly or by incorporating it into the club’s own written policy for the prevention of abuse and harassment.

Definitions

In this Policy and in the Guidelines:

“*Abuse*” means physical or emotional abuse;

“Physical abuse” means the intentional use of force to the body that results in injury. It may be a single incident or a series or pattern of incidents; and

“Emotional abuse” means chronic exposure to alcohol or drug abuse, verbal attacks on a person’s sense of self, repeated rejection or humiliation. It also means exposure to domestic abuse, isolation or existing in an environment of fear and/or anxiety.

“*Harassment*” means any conduct by an individual that is directed at, and offensive to, another person or persons and which the individual knew, or ought reasonably to have known, would cause offence or harm. It comprises of any objectionable act, comment or display that belittles, demeans or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment or any act of intimidation or threat.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Conduct that erodes the dignity of the victim, particularly based on the victim's color, race, national origin, ethnic origin, age, gender, physical characteristics, or physical or mental disability;
- Unwelcome and demeaning remarks, jokes, and innuendos about race, religion, age, national origin, marital status, colour or disability;
- Use, display, or distribution of racist, derogatory, or other offensive written material;
- Practical jokes based on race or other discriminatory grounds;
- Verbal abuse or threats; and
- Inappropriate or offensive gestures.

“Sexual abuse” means engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a protected person, or forcing or encouraging a protected person to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts, alone or with another person of any age of the same sex or the opposite sex.

Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- Non-touching offences;
- Indecent exposure; and
- Exposing a protected person to sexual or pornographic material.

“Sexual harassment” means sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is a technique used by sexual predators to desensitize or “groom” their victims.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Sexual advances;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life, and comments about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or drawings; and
- Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact, such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments.

“Protected person” means a youth or other vulnerable person, and

“Youth” means any student involved with the Youth Exchange, regardless of age, and any person less than 18 years of age involved in another Rotary program (such as RYLA, Interact or any other community or youth service project), activity or event and to whom Rotary may have a duty of care, and specifically includes children; and

“Vulnerable person” means anyone who is elderly, physically or mentally disabled or infirm, or suffering from any sort of disability that might render him or her in need of protection or care, who is involved in a Rotary program, activity or event and to whom Rotary may have a duty of care.

“Prohibited person” means anyone who

- (a) Has been convicted of an offence which resulted in harm to an individual, including assault, sexual assault, sexual interference with a minor or failure to provide the necessities of life;
- (b) Has been convicted of any offence which, in the opinion of the District Protection Officer, suggests an unacceptable risk of harm to a person in the care of that individual; or
- (c) Is subject to a court order prohibiting that person from being in contact with any other individual.

Policy Statement

It is the responsibility of every Rotarian and every volunteer in Rotary programs to safeguard the welfare of every person with whom they come into contact during Rotary activities. Special attention is to be given to protected persons. This includes the prevention of abuse and harassment.

Rotarians and volunteers should always:

- Treat protected persons with respect;
- Provide a model of good and appropriate behaviour;
- Respect protected persons’ right to privacy;
- Be aware that behaviour can be misinterpreted even when well intentioned; and
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour.

District Commitments

In accordance with its moral, ethical and legal obligations, insofar as possible the District:

1. Will ensure that protected persons who are involved in Youth Exchange and in other District programs, activities or events are protected from abuse, harassment, sexual abuse or sexual harassment;
2. Will ensure that District programs for protected persons are provided in a safe and caring environment;
3. Will prevent contact between protected persons and individuals who are either prohibited by law from working with protected persons, or who are considered by the District to be inappropriate individuals to be working with protected persons;
4. Will NOT permit a prohibited person to participate in any program related to protected persons;
5. Will NOT permit any person to host or become a counsellor or a mentor to a Youth Exchange student, whether as a home-stay parent or as an adult living in the same home in which the Youth Exchange student will live, without first determining the suitability of the person through the District's Youth Exchange screening process;
6. Will designate each year a District Protection Officer whose duties will include maintaining and raising awareness of this Policy and advising the District Governor with respect to matters of harassment or abuse;
7. Will encourage and facilitate the timely reporting of incidents where protected persons are at risk of harm;
8. Will ensure prompt notification of allegations of abuse or harassment made by protected persons where allegations involve Rotarians or persons involved with Rotary programs, activities or events; and
9. Will report any allegations of abuse of protected persons in compliance with provincial legislation and as outlined in the Guidelines.

Screening and Selection of Rotarians and Volunteers

In connection with the Youth Exchange:

- a) Host families will be screened by means of:
 - i) A written application that includes programs rules and requirements, a signed compliance statement, and authorization for a reference check and criminal background check for all adult residents of the host home;
 - ii) Interviews in which all family members who live in the home are present to determine suitability for hosting exchange students;
 - iii) Announced and unannounced visits prior to and during the exchange;

- iv) Reference checks;
 - v) Criminal Record Check for working with youth, which also includes Vulnerable Sector Screening (these are available through your local police force for a nominal fee, and should be kept on file by the club);
- b) Youth Exchange volunteers will be screened by means of:
- i) A signed compliance statement that includes authorization for a reference check and criminal background check;
 - ii) Interviews to determine suitability of volunteer to work with youth;
 - iii) Reference checks; and
 - iv) For those adult participants in the Youth Exchange who have direct unsupervised contact with one or more Youth Exchange students, a Criminal Record Check for working with youth, which also includes Vulnerable Sector Screening.

For all other District programs, events and activities involving protected persons, Rotarians and volunteers who will be involved on a regular or continuing basis with protected persons will provide to the District Committee chair responsible for the program, event or activity a completed Criminal Record Check for youth or otherwise as appropriate.

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.

Adopted by the RI Board of Directors, November 2002