

Rotary International District 7850, Inc.

Youth Protection Policy

Date July 2011

Introduction

Rotary International (RI) requires all Rotary Districts to have a youth protection policy. The Youth Exchange program through the Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) has a Student Protection Policy which the Rotary International District 7850, Inc (District 7850) shall follow as to any Youth Exchange Student. This policy is for all other District 7850 programs involving youth including but not limited to Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), Earlyact, Rotaract and Interact. RI Board of Directors' policies shall control over this policy in the event of any conflict.

Policy Framework

1. Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth

District 7850, clubs within the district and all Rotarians are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. It is the duty of all Rotarians, spouses, partners, and any 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.

2. Definitions

Volunteer: Any adult involved with Rotary activities that has direct interactions with youth. This includes, but is not limited to, club and district officers and committee members, Rotarian counselors, Rotarians and non-Rotarians, their spouses and partners that host students for activities or outings or who might drive students to events or functions. Background checks need not be conducted for adults who will have only casual or occasional group interactions with youth, for example, Rotarians present at a club meeting attended by youth involved in Rotary activities.

Student: Youth involved with RYLA, Earlyact, Interact, Rotaract or any other Rotary activity or program involving minors under the age of majority. This policy will, however, extend to all participants in such activities or programs regardless of whether they are over or under the age of majority.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse refers to engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a student, or forcing or encouraging a student to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts, alone or with another person of any age of the same sex or the opposite sex. Additional examples of sexual abuse could include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Non-touching offenses such as engaging in sexual activities within sight of a student
- ◆ Indecent exposure

- ◆ Exposing a student to sexual or pornographic material

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment refers to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, 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.

Examples of sexual harassment could include, but are 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
- ◆ Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact, such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments

Youth Activities: Any Rotary program or activity (except Rotary Youth Exchange) which involves minors, including but not limited to RYLA, EarlyAct, Interact and Rotaract. Youth Exchange through ESSEX has their own specific child protection policies that must be followed for Youth Exchange.

Liability Insurance

District 7850 and US Rotary Clubs are covered under the U.S. Rotary Club and District General Liability Insurance Program for activities within the United States. Canadian clubs or any activities outside of the United States must have independent liability coverage.

3. Volunteer Selection and Screening

All volunteers interested in participating in a Youth Activity must:

- ◆ Complete a *Youth Volunteer Affidavit* form and authorize the district to conduct a criminal background check at least once every three years (subject to local laws and practices).
- ◆ Undergo a personal interview by the Rotarian leading the program at the District or Club level.
- ◆ Provide a list of references.
- ◆ Meet RI and district eligibility requirements for working with students. RI requires that any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment be prohibited from working with youth in a Rotary context. If an individual is accused of sexual abuse or harassment, and the investigation into the claim is inconclusive, then, for the safety of youth participants and the protection of the accused, additional safeguards must be put in place to assure the protection of any youth with whom the individual may have future conduct. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated to participate in youth programs. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position.
- ◆ Understand and comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Activities.

Rotarian counselors must meet the criteria for *All Volunteers*. In addition, counselors must be trained in responding to any problems or concerns which may arise which may include instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment.

4. Student Selection and Screening

All students interested in participating in any Youth Activity in District 7850 must:

- ◆ Attend and participate in all club or district orientation and training sessions required by the program.
- ◆ If applicable, complete a written application for the Activity
- ◆ If applicable, be interviewed for their suitability for participation in the Youth Activity.

All parents or legal guardians of students interested in participating in the Youth Activities must give their permission in writing for the student to participate in the program.

5. Training

District 7850 will provide student protection training to all Youth Activities program participants, as follows:

- ◆ Adapt the *Student Protection Training Manual* to include relevant information on specific district guidelines, local customs, cultural issues, and legal requirements.
- ◆ Develop a calendar for training and define the frequency of training required for each volunteer position, including descriptions of who is to participate, when training should occur, and how training will be conducted.
- ◆ Conduct specialized training sessions for the following youth activities program participants:
 - District governor , District Governor Elect, District Governor Nominee
 - District committee members
 - Club Presidents and Club committee members who are involved in youth activities
 - Rotarian counselors
 - Other Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Youth activities
 - Establish guidelines to ensure that all those required to be trained have participated.

6. Allegation Reporting Guidelines

All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled in accord with the *Student Protection Allegation Reporting Guidelines*, found in *Appendix B*.

7. Investigation Guidelines

District 7850 takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will investigate each allegation thoroughly. District 7850 will cooperate with all law enforcement, child protective services, and other official investigations, and will conduct independent investigations in a way that does not interfere with official investigations.

9. Other District Responsibilities

District 7850:

- ◆ Has a procedure for reporting, investigating, and proper handling of non-criminal offenses or historic cases that law enforcement will not investigate.
- ◆ Retains student documentation for a period of ten years

- ◆ Provides each student with a list of local services in the district (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.)
- ◆ Will provide students access a “District Hotline.”
- ◆ May appoint an independent lawyer, therapist or counselor to represent any alleged victim in cases of sexual abuse or harassment.
- ◆ Will report all criminal allegations or other serious incidents (accidents, crimes, death) involving students to RI within 24 hours.
- ◆ Will report all cases of harassment verified to RI.
- ◆ Will evaluate and review this policy and accompanying procedures regularly.

10. Club Compliance

District 7850 will monitor and ensure that all participating clubs in the district comply with RI guidelines for youth protection. All clubs that wish to apply to the district for certification must provide a copy of the following for review and approval:

- ◆ List of services in the area (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, law enforcement agencies, community services, private services)
- ◆ Club student protection training program (which may be the District program). In the event that a club does the program the content must be approved by the District Governor.

Participating clubs must agree to:

- ◆ Complete and return a signed compliance statement that the club is operating their program in accordance with District and RI policy(ies).
- ◆ Conduct reference checks and, if needed, criminal background checks, and for all volunteers involved with the programs.
- ◆ All volunteers must complete and sign the *Youth Volunteer Affidavit* found in *Appendix A*.
- ◆ Follow the *Student Protection Reporting Guidelines* found in *Appendix B*.
- ◆ Report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment to the appropriate authorities immediately, then to the District Youth Protection Officer, the District Governor and the leadership of the club.
- ◆ Provide each student with a comprehensive local services list.
- ◆ Report all serious incidents (accidents, crimes, death) involving students to the District Governor and the Club President immediately
- ◆ Provide each student with the following contacts whom they may contact in case of emergency:
 - Club President
 - District or Club Chair
 - District Governor
 - District Hotline