



Rotary District 7780 Protection Policy

Prevention of Abuse and Harassment

Revised: March 2023

1. Purpose and Statement of Conduct for Rotarians and Clubs

A. District 7780 is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. To that end, the district clubs and their members will strive to establish a culture of respect and conduct consistent with the 4-Way Test: Of the things we think, say or do

First, is it the truth?

Second, is it fair to all concerned?

Third, will it build goodwill and better friendships?

Fourth, will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Our thoughts, words and actions in our interactions with fellow Rotarians, the youth with whom we work, our associates, partners and spouses, other volunteers and the community must be respectful and appropriate at all times.

Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and protection of all children and youth, vulnerable persons, fellow Rotarians and volunteers with whom we interact in our Rotary activities. This shall include safety and protection from physical, sexual and emotional abuse or harassment and extends to all activities of Interact, Rotaract, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) and Rotary Youth Exchange as well as to other projects and programs of Rotary Clubs and District 7780.

B. It will be the responsibility of all members of Rotary Clubs in District 7780 to safeguard the welfare of persons with whom they come into contact during Rotary activities. While special attention is to be given under this policy to protected persons, everyone with whom we interact is entitled to protection from abuse and harassment. Rotarians and volunteers should always:

Provide a model of good and appropriate behavior.

Treat others with respect.

Respect each person's right to privacy.

Be aware that behavior can be misinterpreted even when well intentioned.

Challenge unacceptable behavior.

Rotary Clubs place great emphasis on their work with people in the community. Rotary's volunteer efforts are 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 and events.

C. Therefore, all allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with these guidelines. However, nothing in these guidelines is intended to preempt referral of criminal activity to law enforcement authorities. When an allegation is made, the safety and well-being of children, youth, vulnerable persons or other protected persons shall always be the first priority. Since an allegation does not necessarily mean that abuse or harassment occurred, this policy will also assist in ensuring that an adult against whom an allegation is made is treated fairly.

2. Scope

This policy applies to children, youth, young adults and vulnerable persons, regardless of age, who come into contact with Rotarians and volunteers in District or Club programs, activities and events. This policy shall also apply to fellow Rotarians, volunteers, spouses, partners, guests and community members participating in such activities.

Clubs must adhere to club responsibilities as identified in Section 10 of this document. This includes adoption of this policy either in whole or as part of its own club policy approved by District 7780.

3. Definitions

A. Volunteer: Any adult involved with any Rotary sponsored activity who has direct, unsupervised interactions with youth or other protected persons. Volunteers include but are not limited to:

- Club Protection Officers(CPO) and District Protection Officer (DPO)
- Youth Exchange Officers (YEO), Youth Exchange Counselors (YEC) and Youth Exchange Committee members.
- RYLA staff, Interact and Rotaract advisors.
- Rotarians and non-Rotarians who host youth or other protected individuals for activities and outings including transportation to and from the event or function. • Long Term (Greater than 14 days) or Short Term (less than 14 days) Host Parents

and other adult members of the host family, including all offspring.

In general, adults who have only casual or occasional group interactions with youth and protected individuals are not considered volunteers under this policy. However, as Rotarians they would still be held to the same level of conduct regarding interactions.

- B. Youth/Young Adult:** Children and adolescents under the age of 21 who are involved with any Rotary sponsored program, activity or event.
 - C. Vulnerable Person:** Any person with a disability who is in need of assistance to meet his or her basic personal care and self-management needs or a person who is not capable of rational decision making due to their advanced age or other circumstances.
 - D. Protected Person:** Any child, youth, young adult, or vulnerable person to whom Rotary owes a duty of care.
 - E. Sexual Abuse:** Engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a protected person, or forcing or encouraging a protected person to engage in such acts alone or with another person of any age regardless of gender. Sexual abuse shall include but is not limited to non-touching offenses, indecent exposure or exposing a protected person to media with explicit content, sexual or pornographic material.
 - F. Sexual Harassment:** Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, use of sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, inappropriate comments regarding one's sexual activity, preferences, deficiencies or prowess may be considered harassment. Harassment may also include but is not limited to verbal or physical communication of a sexual nature; displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures or drawings; photographs; sexual leering or whistling; any inappropriate physical contact, gestures or obscene language; and suggestive or insulting comments.
 - G. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor:** Aiding or encouraging a minor to violate any federal or state law, municipal or county ordinance, or court order.
 - H. District Protection Officer (DPO):** Rotarian appointed by the District Governor to oversee the enforcement of the Protection Policy for the District. Job description identified in Section 9 of this document.
 - I. Club Protection Officer (CPO):** Rotary club member appointed by the Club President to oversee the enforcement of the Protection Policy at the club level. In the absence of an appointment, the Club President shall serve as the Club Protection Officer. Job description identified in section 11 of this document.
 - J. Youth Exchange Officer (YEO):** Responsible for the detailed duties specific to the Youth Exchange Program. Oversees the Youth Exchange Program for the club.
 - K. Youth Exchange Counselor (YEC):** Acts as an intermediary for the exchange student and host family and serves as the youth's advocate and confidante. Assists the YEO in fulfilling Youth Exchange responsibilities.
- NOTE:** The Rotary Youth Exchange Program has additional policies and procedures to which clubs and individuals must adhere. Complete information regarding this program may be found on District 7780 website under Youth Services/ Youth

Exchange tabs.

4. Volunteer Selection and Screening

A. Each Volunteer must complete an application (Appendix B) every three years authorizing the District or Club to conduct a background check. The background check may be completed through the following sites:

Maine residents; InforME www.maine.gov/informe

New Hampshire residents; New Hampshire State Police
www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/jib/crimrecords

ESSEX; www.exchangestudent.org

Background checks completed by law enforcement, schools or local government may meet this requirement for volunteers.

Anyone participating in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program must complete a background check through ESSEX.

Documentation regarding background checks shall be submitted to and maintained by the local club or by the District depending on the volunteer activity.

References must be provided to and checked by the Club Protection Officer or the District Protection Officer. Documentation shall be maintained by the respective officer.

The Club or District Protection Officer will interview each volunteer applicant and provide him/her with a copy of the Club and/or District Protection Policy.

Volunteers or applicants who have admitted to, been convicted of, or are otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment are prohibited from working with children, youth or any other vulnerable or protected person in a Rotary program.

B. Requirements for Long Term or Short Term Host Families

See Rotary District 7780 Website Youth Services/Youth Exchange tabs for details regarding the Youth Exchange Program and a more specific and detailed policy.

All Youth Exchange Volunteers must meet the guidelines set forth in this policy and must undergo a comprehensive interview conducted by the CPO and/or YEO that determines the family's suitability for hosting youth. The screening interview shall include all family members over the age of 10 and should assess whether:

- There is a demonstrated commitment to the safety and security of the youth.
- The motivation for hosting a youth is consistent with Rotary ideals.
- The financial ability to provide accommodation (room and board) for the youth is adequate.

- The ability exists to provide appropriate supervision and parental responsibility to ensure the youth's well-being.

An in-home screening visit must be conducted for each host family prior to approval during which this policy will be shared and must be acknowledged. In-home screeners will provide the host family with ideas and best practices for creating a positive experience for the youth, family, club and community.

Other requirements may be set forth by the club, District 7780 or ESSEX as determined by the Youth Exchange Policy.

5. Allegation and Reporting Guidelines

All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with the following guidelines:

The District Protection Officer and District Governor must be notified of any allegation.

Any allegation of criminal behavior must be reported to law enforcement by any mandated reporter.

Any allegation of improper conduct by a Rotarian volunteer must result in the removal of that volunteer from the activity until an investigation is completed.

The club, District Protection Officer and/or District Governor shall ensure the safety of any protected person who is a victim of abuse or harassment, and shall provide referrals for counseling and support.

The Club Board shall review each allegation of unwelcome physical contact, advances or comments at Rotary events or activities and respond to the allegation within a reasonable time frame. If the offending individual is a member of the board, he or she is expected to recuse himself or herself from the discussion.

Any failure on the part of the club or its board to adequately address allegations of inappropriate behavior shall be referred to the District Governor as per Rotary International Policy.

Allegations of unwelcome behavior at the district level must be reviewed by the District Governor. It is the responsibility of the District to follow through on such allegations. Any allegation involving the District Governor shall be referred to the DPO and to the Immediate Past District Governor.

6. Investigation Guidelines

All clubs and the district will cooperate with law enforcement or child protective

services investigations. Rotary may conduct its own independent investigation consistent with Rotary International, district and club policies. However, such investigations shall not interfere with law enforcement or child protective criminal proceedings or investigations

Allegations of unwelcome physical contact, advances or comments at Rotary events or activities shall be reviewed by the District Governor or a committee appointed for this purpose and addressed within a reasonable time frame. If the District Governor is the alleged offending individual or otherwise recuses himself or herself, 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.

7. Training in Protection for Youth and Other Vulnerable Individuals

All volunteers who are participating in Rotary activities involving children, youth or other vulnerable or protected individuals will receive training regarding protection policies at a frequency determined by the District Protection Officer. These volunteers include, but not limited to:

- District Governor, District Governor Elect, District Governor Nominee
- District Committee Coordinators involved with youth activities
- Club Protection Officers
- RYLA counselors and Interact advisors
- Rotarians and volunteers working directly with protected persons.

8. District Responsibilities

A. Establish a standing District 7780 Protection Committee to include:

- District Protection Officer
- Youth Services Chair
- Representatives of District programs involving youth
- Sitting District Governor or designee
- Representatives of relevant professions

B. Responsibilities of the District Protection Committee include but are not limited to:

- Development of an effective District Protection Policy
- Promulgation of the District Protection Policy to all members and clubs
- Meet annually and/or as needed to update the District Protection Policy
 - Address any concerns or allegations of abuse in District Rotary programs
 - Take appropriate action in response to allegations of abuse or harassment.
 - Ensure records regarding background checks, volunteer applications and screening documentation are maintained in accordance with policy.
 - Have a procedure for reporting, investigating and properly handling

- criminal and non-criminal offenses.
- Offer assistance in locating resources for children, youth, and other vulnerable or protected persons who are alleged to be victims of abuse or harassment subject to this policy.
- Report all criminal activity involving any Rotary youth activity to RI within 72 hours.

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9. District Protection Officer

Appointed by the District Governor, the DPO is responsible for meeting the following job description and responsibilities :

- Serve as the mandated reporter for the District as defined by state statute. The DPO will report incidents to appropriate law enforcement and/or social service agencies as required by law.
- Assist clubs in recruitment, selection and training of Club Protection Officers.
- Provide training for clubs or ensure appropriate training regarding protection policy.
- Maintain familiarity with current state and federal laws and Rotary International policies and practices with respect to children, youth, vulnerable and other protected persons.
- Develop and distribute training material.
- Provide articles and/or relevant information to be disseminated to Clubs and Rotarians.
- Develop training calendars and criteria for clubs and Rotarians.

10. Club Responsibilities

A Rotary club participating in activities, programs or events involving children, youth, and other vulnerable or protected persons must:

- Adopt an approved Club Protection Policy or affirm the District Protection Policy.
 - Notify the District Protection Officer of adoption or affirmation of the policy.
 - Ensure its Club Protection Officer (CPO) is fulfilling job responsibilities as defined.
 - Ensure its CPO reports directly to the Club President.
 - Cooperate with law enforcement and with child protective services.
- Secure background checks in accordance with policy. (Appendix C). The cost of background checks shall be the responsibility of the club.

11. Club Protection Officer

Clubs will appoint a Club Protection Officer (CPO) whose duties are as follows:

- Assuring the volunteers including YEO, YEC and host families are trained in

protection procedures and how to respond to an abuse or harassment allegation.

- Providing information to exchange students about local and district services as outlined in the Youth Exchange guidelines.
- Arranging to have all volunteers working directly with protected persons in Rotary programs complete a volunteer application. (Appendix B) and submit for a background check.
- Conducting personal or phone reference checks for all volunteers.
- Following all procedures in District 7780's policy for reporting abuse and harassment.
- Reporting accidents, crimes, injuries or fatalities involving protected persons to the District Governor and District Protection Officer.
- Reporting to the District Governor and District Protection Officer any premature return of an exchange student to his or her home or any unexpected termination of the student from the program.

12. Rotary Youth Exchange Program Requirements

Rotary District 7780 Youth Exchange Program is part of Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) which is an incorporated entity and maintains liability insurance sufficient to cover claims reasonably considered possible. All Youth Exchange Programs supported by clubs in District 7780 will abide by the practices and procedures indicated in the District Protection Policy, as well as the policies and requirements of the Eastern States Student Exchange program as outlined in the District 7780 Youth Services/Youth Exchange Policy

13. Sanctions

- A.** A club may not grant membership to a person who has been convicted of (in a criminal proceeding) or found liable for (in a civil proceeding) sexual abuse, physical abuse or sexual harassment.
- B.** An admission of, or conviction for committing sexual abuse, physical abuse or sexual harassment is sufficient evidence of violation of this policy. Clubs will terminate the membership of any member who has admitted, or been convicted of these crimes. Should a club fail to terminate the membership of the Rotarian, the District Governor should notify the Board of Directors of Rotary International that sanctions against the member or club may be warranted under RI policies, including the possibility the club's charter may be revoked.
- C.** A non-Rotarian who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse, physical abuse, or sexual harassment shall be prohibited from working with protected persons during Rotary events, activities or programs.
- D.** If an investigation into a claim of sexual abuse, physical abuse or sexual harassment is inconclusive, additional safeguards should be put in place to ensure the safety and protection of all concerned in the event of future contact between the parties in the course of a Rotary event or activity.

- E.** In the event of a claim of abuse or harassment against an accused, the accused should be prohibited from working with protected persons in Rotary events, activities or programs pending resolution of the allegations.
- F.** Regardless of criminal guilt or civil liability, the continued presence of an accused at a Rotary event or activity could be detrimental to the reputation of the organization; clubs should take steps to protect Rotary's reputation and ensure the integrity of their events, activities and programs.
- G.** A person who is accused but later cleared of charges, or the charges otherwise are determined to be unfounded, may apply to be reinstated to full participation in Rotary events, activities and programs. Reinstatement is not a right and each case should be assessed on its own facts, and no guarantee should be made that he or she will be reinstated to any former role or responsibility.