



ROTARY YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDE



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DISTRICT 9213 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing and implementing an effective youth protection policy demonstrates a District's commitment to protecting Rotary youth program participants. This document provides a basic framework for a District policy for all youth programs.

1.1. Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth

Rotary District 9213 (hereinafter referred to as “**The District**”) strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

2. DEFINITIONS

- i. **Volunteer:** Any adult involved with Rotary youth activities who interacts directly with youth, whether supervised or unsupervised.

Rotary volunteers include:

- a. Club and District youth program officers and committee members,
 - b. Rotary member and nonmember counselors,
 - c. Members and nonmembers and their spouses and partners who work with youth and students during activities or outings or who transport youth and students to events, and
 - d. Youth Exchange host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members.
- ii. **Youth program participant:** Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, regardless of age.
 - iii. **Offender:** Anyone who commits an act of abuse or harassment. Other terms used to describe offenders include predator, child abuser, child molester, or pedophile.
 - iv. **Accused person:** Someone alleged to have committed abuse or harassment can be called an accused person while the matter is still under investigation.

- v. **Emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse:** The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assault to control the behavior of another. Examples include rejecting the person, preventing them from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements based on characteristics that include age, ethnicity, race, colour, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture and gender.
- vi. **Physical abuse:** Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.
- vii. **Neglect:** Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical or emotional care that is necessary to well being.
- viii. **Consent:** An informed, knowing, and voluntary decision to engage in an activity or behavior.
- ix. **Sexual abuse:** Engaging in or arranging implicit or explicit sexual acts. This includes pressuring someone to perform a sexual act alone, or sexually engaging directly with another person of any age or gender through force or coercion, or with anyone who is unable to give consent.

Any sexual activity between a legal adult and a minor or youth program participant, or any nonconsensual sexual activity between peers, is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also include offenses that do not involve touching, such as voyeurism, indecent exposure, stalking, electronic harassment, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

- x. **Sexual harassment:** Sexual advances, requests for sexual acts, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone who is unwilling or unable to consent. It can be physical or verbal, and even occur in the form of electronic communication, such as in text messages or on social media. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize someone or accustom them to inappropriate behavior. Examples of sexual harassment include:
 - a) Sexual nicknames or jokes, references to sexual conduct, gossip about someone's sex life, or comments about a person's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess.
 - b) Giving private or secret gifts, including those of a sexual nature.
 - c) Verbal comments or statements of a sexual nature.
 - d) Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
 - e) Requests for sexual acts.
 - f) Sexual leering or whistling.
 - g) Inappropriate physical contact, such as intentionally brushing against a person.
 - h) Obscene language or gestures.

- i) Suggestive or insulting comments.
- xi. **Grooming:** Establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive.
- xii. **Community grooming:** Manipulating or convincing others into thinking that an offender is caring, kind, and respectable in order to cause members of the community to ignore warning signs of predatory behavior.

3. Legal Entity

The District is part of a company limited by guarantee formed under the laws of Uganda.

4. ENFORCEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

4.1. Club Compliance

- i. The District Governor is responsible for supervising and controlling all youth activities in the District, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange. The District will monitor all participating clubs and ensure that they comply with youth protection and Rotary Youth Exchange certification requirements.
- ii. All clubs that participate in Rotary Youth Exchange must provide the District with a copy of the following for review and approval:
 - a) A signed compliance statement that the club is operating its program in accordance with District and Rotary International (“RI”) policies including confirmation that volunteers are prohibited from contact with program participants until a written application, interview, reference check, and criminal background check are conducted and clearance for unsupervised contact with program participants is issued.
 - b) All club materials that advertise the Youth Exchange program, including brochures, applications, policies, and websites.
 - c) Any club youth protection training materials

4.2. Appointment of a District Youth Protection Officer

The District shall appoint a District Youth Protection Officer (hereinafter referred to as “youth protection officer”) to advise it and its clubs on abuse and harassment prevention and to help manage risks and any crises that affect the safety of youth. The youth protection officer should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development, and may or may not be a Rotary member.

A youth protection officer’s roles include:

- a) To monitor changes in national and local laws related to youth protection to keep District policies and procedures up to date, as well as any changes in RI policies, and tell the District governor and District program chairs about them.
- b) To work with the District and clubs to inform all Rotary members of their youth protection obligations.
- c) To confirm that appropriate screening measures are used for all youth programs, in compliance with Rotary policies and local laws.
- d) To direct the selection of Rotary member and nonmember volunteers and make sure that volunteer screening is documented appropriately.
- e) To ensure that appropriate training is provided to Rotary members, other volunteers, and youth program participants and their parents.
- f) To oversee the proper handling of allegations, harassment, or other crises, and protect the interests of all who are involved.
- g) To work with the District Governor to maintain confidential records of all allegations of abuse, harassment, or other crises and all people who are prohibited from working with youth, as RI policy requires.
- h) To make sure applicable prohibitions are applied each year, even as leaders change.

4.3 Youth Protection Committee

- i. The District Youth Protection Officer shall establish the Youth Protection Committee.
- ii. The purpose of the Youth Protection Committee is to:
 - a) handle any allegations reported to them.
 - b) to come up with a policy of how to handle allegations reported to it subject to the procedure set out in these guidelines.

4.4 Chairs, and Other Club Officers

Rotary Club Presidents have the overall responsibility for operating and coordinating club youth activities, with support from club committee members.

A club's President and committees should:

- a) Know all Rotary and District youth protection policies and program operations that apply to a club's involvement and ensure that club programs meet policy requirements.
- b) Implement required training, screening, program logistics, and risk management procedures.
- c) Engage regularly with youth program participants to get feedback on the programs.
- d) Coordinate with the District youth program chair and District youth protection officer to respond immediately and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, and other crises.

4.5. Volunteer Selection and Screening guidelines

- i. Rotary International does not tolerate any form of abuse or harassment.
- ii. All Rotary member and nonmember volunteers who are interested in working with youth program participants must meet Rotary International and District eligibility requirements.
- iii. RI prohibits the membership and participation of any Rotarian or non-Rotary volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been known to have engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment or other act that violates the accepted standard of behavior in the community.
- iv. Districts are required to maintain confidential records of individuals prohibited from contact with youth and make sure that these prohibitions are implemented consistently throughout the District from year to year.
- v. People who are prohibited from working with youth also may not serve as District Interact Chair, Interact Club Adviser, District RYLA Chair, District Youth Exchange Chair, District Youth Protection Officer, or in any other locally appointed club or District role in which they might have contact with youth.
- vi. If a person is accused of sexual abuse or harassment and law enforcement's investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, additional safeguards are necessary to protect any youth program participants with whom the accused might have future contact, as well as the accused. A person who has been cleared of charges may apply to continue as a youth program volunteer. Such reinstatement is not a right, and reinstatement to a former position is not guaranteed.

- vii. All Rotary members and nonmember Youth Exchange volunteers who have direct, unsupervised contact with program participants of Youth Exchange must:
- a) Complete a volunteer application form.
 - b) Undergo a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices).
 - c) Be interviewed, preferably in person.
 - d) For Youth Exchange host families, the interview determines suitability. It should demonstrate:
 - Commitment to the safety and security of students.
 - Appropriate motives for hosting a student consistent with Rotary's ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange.
 - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student.
 - Ability to provide appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well-being.
 - Provide a list of personal references and their contact information (references may not include family members and not more than one Rotary member).
 - Commitment to comply with RI and District guidelines for the Youth Exchange program.

4.6 Training

- i. The District and its clubs will provide youth protection training and information on youth programs. They will conduct the training sessions.
- ii. The District Youth Exchange program must provide youth protection training and information to all students and volunteers. They will conduct the training sessions.
- iii. The District will:
 - a) Adapt Rotary's Youth Protection Guide to reflect District guidelines, information on local customs and culture, and legal requirements.

- b) Develop a schedule that specifies who will be trained, how often, and in what format.
- c) Conduct specialized training for those involved in Youth Exchange.

5. GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A: Physical interaction Guidelines

- i. Always get consent by asking the other person if it is okay to engage in any type of physical contact, especially with a child (even to engage in a hug). Remember that consent can be withdrawn at any time!
- ii. People should feel comfortable saying no. Understanding what kinds of physical contact are acceptable can foster a positive and safe environment that protects both young people and adults.

Examples:

Acceptable physical interaction (if culturally appropriate and with consent)

- Hugging from the side
- Patting on the shoulder or back
- Shaking hands
- Small gestures of approval, such as a hand gesture or clapping of hands

Unacceptable physical interactions (with or without consent)

- Hugging with full body contact.
- Kissing on the lips
- Showing physical expressions of affection in an isolated location
- Sitting on someone's lap
- Wrestling
- Carrying someone on your back or shoulders
- Tickling
- Massages
- Offering any form of physical affection that is unwanted.
- Touching the bottom, waist, chest, or genital areas
- Making sexual contact of any kind

B: Electronic and online interactions

Communicating with youth by text message, email, social media, or personal phone presents new challenges to keeping youth safe.

Guidelines for electronic communication with youth

- a) Copy or include another volunteer or the participant's parent or guardian in the communication.
- b) Communicate with multiple participants in a closed group or use a website or social media page that is not visible to the public.
- c) Counselors, advisers, and host parents might be allowed to exchange messages with a participant without supervision if they have the prior approval of program leadership.

What to avoid in electronic communication with youth

- a) Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, derogatory, or humiliating comments.
- b) Sexual conversations or images.
- c) Private messages between a volunteer and a youth without prior approval.
- d) Posting pictures of youth participants on social media sites without parental consent.
- e) Posting inappropriate comments on pictures.

C: One-to-one interactions

When an adult and a youth or youth participant spend time alone with each other, that can pose both a greater risk of abuse or harassment for the young person and a risk of allegations of inappropriate behavior for the volunteer/youth.

Guidelines for one to one interactions

- a) It is preferable to have a meeting in a public place where others are present,
- b) If the meeting is in a classroom, office, or other private or semiprivate location, then leave the door open and notify another adult in advance,
- c) If the meeting is in a home or other private location, it should have been approved in advance (for example, Rotary Youth Exchange host family arrangements).

Unacceptable individual interactions

- a) Individual interactions that involve unapproved overnight stays or shared use of showers or toilet facilities.
- b) Transporting only one young person in a vehicle without prior approval by another adult.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL PERSONS

i. Promote a culture of safety

Everyone has a part to play in creating a safe environment for Rotary youth. To establish a culture of safety each person must take signs and warnings of inappropriate behavior seriously.

ii. Service above self

Presidents, leaders and other Rotarians responsible for the youth, must understand the Youth Protection Guidelines and Policies and accept responsibility for implementing them. It is their responsibility to:

- a. ensure that youth for whom they are responsible understand these Guidelines and other Policies and the principles behind it,
- b. create an environment in which dignity in volunteering is actively promoted,
- c. ensure compliance e.g., removal of offensive material or challenging unacceptable behavior even if there is no complaint,
- d. use the agreed Rotary Dispute Management procedures to deal with any formal complaint by volunteers of harassment or bullying brought to their attention,
- e. Ensure that complaints are resolved as swiftly and confidentially as possible with the least disruption. and the complainant and respondent have access to support before, during and after complaints are investigated,
- f. ensure that by their own positive behavior they lead by example and they are sensitive to how others might perceive their behavior,
- g. Ensure that a mechanism for monitoring and reporting the number of cases raised under these Guidelines and other policies and the final outcomes is set up. It is recommended that reports be produced on an annual basis.

iii) Be your brothers' keeper.

- a) Rotarians should ensure safety for each other during and after events or gatherings.
- b) Make sure you drop off a friend at their home after a late night gathering.
- c) Do not allow a friend to go off with strangers.
- d) Patterns of inappropriate behavior must be identified and addressed.
- e) For youth programs:
 - i) Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of all youth program participants,

ii) Give parents or legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information.

iv) Recognize boundaries

As Rotarians we meet in different capacities, and these include as friends, colleagues, mentors, sisters and brothers.

We have to maintain boundaries and be mindful of the relationships we hold with particular people as we relate so that our actions are not seen as harassment to the other party.

v) Speak up: See something say something

It is our duty to embrace this policy and ensure protection for each other. If you see someone being sexually harassed, inform them and finally speak up for them.

vi) Take Responsibility for your actions

Rotarians at events should be aware of the consequences of their actions and take charge for the resulting consequences such as hangovers from drinking.

vii) No alcohol for interactions below 18

- a) Interact Patrons should take responsibility to ensure that in Interact programs and exchange programs, Interactors are not given access to alcohol.
- b) Interact clubs are part of rotary clubs and are bound by national laws which prohibit alcohol for children below 18 years of age.
- c) Exposure to alcohol and allowing Interactors to take alcohol makes them more vulnerable to sexual harassment from peers and Rotarians.

6. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF HARRASMENT

6.1. Responding to Allegations

- i. The District takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will handle them in accordance with the District's Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines (APPENDIX A of these Guidelines).
- ii. The District will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and legal investigations.

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

1. RECEIVING A REPORT ON ABUSE AND HARRASMENT

Any adult to whom a youth or youth program participant reports abuse or harassment must:

- i. Listen attentively and stay calm. Acknowledge that it takes courage to report abuse or harassment. Be supportive, but remain neutral; do not express shock, horror, or disbelief. Assure privacy but not confidentiality. Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse or harassment to make it stop and to prevent it from happening to others.
- ii. Get information, but don't interrogate the participant. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that they did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking why questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives, implying they are at fault, or suggesting that you don't believe them. Remember that your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities.
- iii. Be nonjudgmental and reassuring. Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved even the accused, because it could be someone they care about. It is especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that it was not their fault and that they were brave and mature to come to you.
- iv. Be patient and understanding. A person who has experienced trauma might find it difficult to talk about the details of their experience. Encourage them to report as much as they can or as they feel comfortable discussing. Try to minimize any need for them to explain their experience again.
- v. Document the allegation. Take confidential notes that include details such as dates and locations they reference, as soon after the report as you can. Try to use the young person's exact words.

2. METHODS OF RESOLUTION

A. INFORMAL REPORTING METHODS

The following steps must be taken immediately after alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer. Others, as specified, should be performed by a District officer.

i. **Protect the young person**

Ensure the safety and security of the young person by removing them from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for their safety and is not a punishment. Take immediate action to safeguard the young person's health and well-being, and get them medical or psychological care, if necessary. If both the person who reported the problem and the person who is accused are young people, provide support to both of them.

ii. **Report the allegations to appropriate authorities**

Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment; first for investigation and then to club and District leaders. The investigation of alleged abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement agencies. All investigations must be conducted by authorities that are not affiliated with Rotary.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the one who will be the liaison to and seek guidance from the appropriate agencies.

iii. **Remove the accused person from contact with youth**

The District should remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved.

iv. **Avoid gossip and blame**

Do not tell anyone about the allegation other than those who need to know. Take care to protect the rights of everyone who is involved during the investigation.

The District maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any person who has been accused by enforcing the following procedures:

v. **Follow up and implement safeguards**

All Rotary member and nonmember volunteers who know about an allegation must make sure that the youth protection committee and the District Youth

Protection Officer are informed of it within 72 hours. A District officer will provide ongoing status reports to RI.

The District will also make sure that the parents or legal guardians of the participants (whether they are accused or making the accusation) have been notified. The District will refer all involved young people to an independent, non-Rotary counselor who can provide them professional emotional support

If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, or if the investigation is inconclusive, the District governor will appoint a committee to coordinate an independent review to ensure that District youth protection policies were followed, confirm that youth safety was treated as the highest priority, and determine whether any changes to District procedures are needed.

When the District is notified of the outcome of any investigation by law enforcement, whether criminal or not, it will contact everyone involved in the incident. The District will document all allegations and accusations, as well as the final outcome and the actions taken to resolve the situation. Patterns of inappropriate behavior must be identified and addressed.

B. FORMAL REPORTING REPORTS

FORWARDING A COMPLAINT TO THE YOUTH PROTECTION COMMITTEE

- i. The complaint shall be forwarded to the committee in writing, clearly stating the form of harassment that the youth went through.
- ii. If the event was reported to an officer, they should forward a detailed written complaint of what was reported to them and any precautionary measures taken.
- iii. The committee secretary will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint and forward the complaint to the committee.
- iv. The committee has to conduct a hearing within 14 days after receipt of the complaint.
- v. A notice of hearing will then be given to both the complainant and the person accused of sexual harassment.

3. DECISION OF THE YOUTH PROTECTION COMMITTEE

The committee will accord a fair hearing to both parties and come up with a decision in writing. The decision of the committee should contain the facts of the complaint, the events of the hearing, the basis of the decision and their decision.

The committee will give its decision within a period of one week.

4. APPEALS

- i. If any of the parties is aggrieved with the decision of the youth protection committee, they will send a letter to the District Youth Protection Officer stating their dissatisfaction with the decision of the committee.
- ii. Where the committee fails to hear the complaint within 14 days after it received such complaint, then the aggrieved party shall write to the District Youth Protection Officer requesting him or her to hear the complaint.
- iii. The decision of the District Youth Protection officer shall be final.
- iv. Matters whose justification is beyond the committee will be forwarded to the appropriate courts of law.

5. PENALTIES

If a person accused of sexual harassment is found guilty of any of the acts stated in this Act as sexual harassment the committee or the Youth District Protection officer may give any of the following penalties depending on the gravity of the Act.

- i. Fine in monetary terms
- ii. Barred from participating in Rotary activities for a period of six months
- iii. Disbanded from the club

LEADING STATUTORY AUTHORITIES FOR REFERENCE IN UGANDA

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 as amended
2. The Penal Code Act