



## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL District 6270 Youth Activities Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines

### **This is for clubs that are not involved in youth exchange**

#### **Introduction**

One of the many things Rotary clubs world wide get involved in are activities for youth. This is a very worthwhile endeavor, District 6270 and Rotary International are committed to protecting the safety and well being of participants in Youth activities and will not tolerate any abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines. **The safety and well-being of students should always be the first priority.**

#### **Definitions**

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse refers to engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a participant, or forcing or encouraging a participant 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
- Indecent exposure
- Exposing a child 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

#### **Is it Abuse or is it Harassment?**

Whether the alleged conduct amounts to sexual abuse or sexual harassment is not to be determined by the adult to whom allegations are made. After ensuring the safety of the participant, all allegations should be immediately reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities. In some countries, this reporting is required by law.

## **Allegation Reporting Guidelines**

### ***For use by all adults to whom a youth participant reports an incident of abuse or harassment***

Any adult to whom a participant reports an incident of sexual abuse or harassment is responsible for following these ***Allegation Reporting Guidelines***.

#### **1. *Report from Student Participant***

- a. **Listen attentively and stay calm.** Acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse. It is appropriate to listen and be encouraging. Do not express shock, horror or disbelief.
- b. **Assure privacy but not confidentiality.** Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse/harassment to make it stop and to ensure that it doesn't happen to other participants.
- c. **Get the facts, but don't interrogate.** Ask the participant questions that establish what was done and who did it. Reassure the participant that s/he did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking 'why' questions. Remember your responsibility is to present the student's story to the proper authorities.
- d. **Be non-judgmental and reassure the participant.** Do not be critical of anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It is especially important not to blame or criticize the participant. Assure the participant that the situation was not their fault and that they were brave and mature to come to you.
- e. **Record.** Keep a written record of the conversation with the participant as soon after the report as you can, including the date and time of the conversation. Use the student's words, and record only what has been told to you.

#### **2. *Protect the Student Participant***

Ensure the safety and well-being of the participant. Remove the participant from the situation immediately and all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Give reassurance that this is for the participant's own safety and is not a punishment.

#### **3. *Report to Appropriate Law Enforcement Authorities***

Immediately report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment to the appropriate law enforcement authorities first and then to the club and district leadership for investigation. In District 6270, the appropriate law enforcement office would be the local police or child protective services agency. In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the Rotarian counselor who has responsibility for seeking the advice of and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of the Rotarian counselor, the district Youth Protection Officer should be contacted. All allegations must be reported to RI within 72 hours; the person responsible for doing so is the Youth Protection Officer. District 6270 will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

District 6270 has researched local, state, and national laws related to sexual abuse and harassment prevention and notes the following legal requirements of which all adult volunteers participating in the program must be aware: All allegations of sexual abuse must be reported to the local police.

#### **4. *Avoid Gossip and Blame***

Do not tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines. Care must be taken to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.

District 6270 maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person by enforcing the following procedures: As outlined in the district privacy policy.

5. ***Do Not Challenge the Alleged Offender***

The adult to whom the participant reports must not contact the alleged offender. In cases of abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. *In cases of non-criminal harassment, the district youth protection officer and district governor are responsible for investigating, and will be in contact with the alleged offender after the participant has been moved to a safe environment.*

6. ***Follow-Up***

After reporting allegations to the Rotarian counselor or district Youth Protection Officer, follow up to make sure steps are being taken to address the situation. Specifically, District 6270 will conduct an independent and thorough investigation into any claims of sexual abuse or harassment. Any adult against whom an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment is made will be removed from all contact with youth until the matter is resolved.

## **Post Report Procedures**

### ***For Use by Rotarian Counselors and Youth Activities Chairs***

The participant's Rotarian counselor and the Youth Activities chair are responsible for ensuring that the following steps are taken immediately following an abuse allegation is reported.

1. The adult to whom the participant reports the abuse should follow the *Allegation Reporting Guidelines*.
2. Confirm that the participant has been removed from the situation immediately and all contact with alleged abuser or harasser.
3. Contact appropriate law enforcement agency immediately (if not already done). If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, the club or district Youth Exchange chair should coordinate an independent investigation into the allegations.
4. Ensure the participant receives immediate support services.
5. Offer the participant an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent the interests of the participant. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the Youth Activities program.
6. Contact the youth's parents or legal guardian. If away from home, provide the youth with the option of either staying or returning home.
7. Remove alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with the specific participant and other youth while investigations are conducted.
8. Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
9. The student's Rotarian Counselor should inform the district Youth Protection Officer and District Governor of the allegation. Either the District Governor or the district Youth Protection Officer must inform Rotary International of the allegation within 72 hours, and provide follow-up reports of steps taken, the outcome of all investigations, and resulting actions.

## Post Allegation Report Guidelines

### ***Responding to the Needs of the Youth Participant***

There will need to be a cohesive and managed team approach to supporting the participant after an allegation report. The participant is likely to feel embarrassed, confused, and may become withdrawn and appear to be avoiding members of the club. After a report of harassment or abuse, participants may or may not want to remain in the program. If they do, they may or may not want to continue their relationship with the Rotary club depending on the circumstances. In some cases, a participant may wish to remain in the program, but change to a different club.

It may be difficult for club members to understand how the participant is feeling, but it would be helpful for the participant to know that the club continues to support for them. Club members may experience ambiguity toward their roles and may feel unclear regarding their boundaries. However they need to do whatever is necessary to reassure the participant of their support at all times.

### ***Appropriate Response for Addressing Issues Within the Rotary Club for Allegations Made Against Rotarians or Non-Rotarians***

When addressing an allegation of abuse or harassment, the most important concern is the safety of the participants. Club members should not speculate, make editorial comments, or offer personal opinions that could potentially hinder any police or criminal investigations. Club members should be cautioned about speculating or commenting on the matter during the investigations. Comments made about alleged victims in support of alleged abusers do not support our statement of conduct or Rotary ideals. Comments made against an alleged abuser could lead to a slander or libel claim filed against Rotarians or clubs by the alleged abuser.

Should any Rotarian admit to, or be convicted of, or is otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment, this shall be considered “good cause” and his/her membership will be terminated in accordance with Article 11 sections 5 & 6 of the standard club constitution.

### **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*