

Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines for District 5520

Rotary International is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all youth program participants and will not tolerate their 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 young people must always be our first priority.

Definitions

Sexual abuse. Engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a young person or forcing or encouraging a young person to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts alone or with another person of any age, of the same or opposite sex. This includes nontouching offenses, such as indecent exposure or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

Sexual harassment. 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 used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom their victims.

Some examples of sexual harassment include:

- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or spoken references to sexual conduct, talking about one's sex life in the presence of a young person, and comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Display of 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

Who should determine if it is abuse or harassment?

Upon hearing allegations, adult(s) receiving the report should not determine whether the alleged conduct constitutes sexual abuse or sexual harassment. Instead, after insuring the safety of the youth participant, the adult should immediately report all allegations to the Rotary District Youth Protection Officer and then, with that person's assistance and clarification of the process, to appropriate child protection or law enforcement authorities. In some countries, this reporting is required by law.

Allegation Reporting Guidelines

Any adult to whom a Rotary youth participant reports an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment must follow these reporting guidelines:

1. *Receive the report.*
 - a. Listen attentively and stay calm. Acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse or harassment. 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 in order to make it stop and ensure that it does not happen to others.

- c. Get the facts, but don't interrogate. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the Rotary youth participant that he or she did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking "why" questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives. Remember that your responsibility is to present the story to the proper authorities.
 - d. Be nonjudgmental and reassure. Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It's especially important not to blame or criticize the Rotary youth participant. Emphasize that the situation was not his or her fault and that it was brave and mature to come forward. Document the allegation. Make a written record of the conversation, including the date and time, as soon after the report as you can. Try to use the Rotary youth participant's words and record only what he or she told you.
2. *Protect the Rotary youth participant.*
- a. Ensure the safety and well-being of the Rotary youth participant by removing him or her from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the youth participant that this is being done for his or her safety and is not a punishment.

3. *Report the allegations to appropriate authorities — Rotary District 5520 Youth Protection Officer and then child protection or law enforcement.*

The District 5520 Youth Protection Officer will immediately report all cases of sexual abuse to appropriate law enforcement authorities for investigation. In the portions of District 5520 in Texas, the appropriate law enforcement office is the Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services. The hotline number is 1-800 252-5400, or to a law enforcement agency. In New Mexico reports should be made to the New Mexico State police at 1-888-442-NMSP (6677) or to the Children Youth and Families Dept.

- a. Report allegations of sexual harassment to the current District 5520 Youth Protection Officer or if that person is unavailable, the District Rotary Youth Exchange Chair, who is responsible for seeking the advice of appropriate agencies and interacting with them. If the allegation involves the conduct of the Youth Protection Officer, then the District Rotary Youth Exchange Chair or the District Governor should be the first Rotary contact.
- b. District 5520 leadership will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

4. *Avoid gossip and blame.*

- a. Don't tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines. Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.
- b. District 5520 will maintain the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of

any accused person by limiting discussions only to those people who need to know. The audience will be limited to only those absolutely required (i.e. club leadership for the program, District 5520 Youth Protection Officer, the District Governor, and appropriate government or law enforcement individuals.).

5. Do not challenge the alleged offender.

- a. Don't contact the alleged offender. In cases of sexual abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. In cases of non criminal harassment, the district governor is responsible for follow-through and will contact the alleged offender after the young person has been moved to a safe environment. The district governor may designate this task to the District Youth Protection Officer or a district review committee.

Follow-through Procedures

The District Youth Protection Officer (or alternatively the Rotary Youth Exchange Chair) will insure that the following steps are taken immediately after a sexual abuse allegation is reported.

1. Confirm that the Rotary youth participant has been removed from the situation immediately and has no contact with the alleged sexual abuser.
2. If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, the District Youth Protection Officer or district review committee should coordinate an independent review of the allegations.
3. Ensure that the youth participant receives immediate support services.
4. Offer the Rotary youth participant an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent his or her interests. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the youth program.
5. Contact the youth participant's parents or legal guardian.
If the Rotary youth participant is away from home, the participant and his or her parents should decide whether the participant will stay in the program or return home. If the Rotary youth participant stays, written authorization from the youth participant's parents or legal guardian is required before the student will be allowed to stay with the program. If the youth participant and his/her parents choose for the Rotary youth participant to return home and an investigation is pending, the investigating agency will be consulted prior to making travel arrangements and removing the student from that jurisdiction. The agency may not approve the Rotary youth participant leaving the jurisdiction.
6. Remove alleged abuser from all contact with any other young participants in Rotary programs and activities while investigations are conducted.
7. Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
8. Inform the District Youth Protection Officer of the allegation.

Youth Protection Officer or the Rotary Youth Exchange Chair will inform Rotary International of the allegation within 72 hours and provide follow-up reports of steps taken and the status of investigations.

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