

# ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5520 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Updated 3/25/2019

Developing and implementing this youth protection policy demonstrates District 5520's ongoing commitment to protecting Rotary youth program participants in both Club and District sponsored programs. The sections in **blue** are a part of Rotary's certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange; additional requirements and policies governing District 5520's youth exchange program are stated in the South Central Rotary Youth Exchange Bylaws.

## DISTRICT 5520 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

### 1. Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth

District 5520 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 emotional abuse.

### 2. Definitions

**Volunteer** — Any adult involved with Rotary youth activities who interacts directly with youth, whether supervised or unsupervised

For Youth Exchange, volunteers include, among others, club and district Youth Exchange officers and committee members; Rotarian counselors; Rotarians and non-Rotarians and their spouses and partners who work with students during activities or outings or who transport students to events; and host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members.

**Youth program participant** — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, whether child or adult

### 3. Incorporation and Liability Insurance

District 5520's Youth Exchange is a program of District 5520 and part of a separate legal entity known as South Central Rotary Youth Exchange, Inc. (SCRYE). This entity has been formed under the laws of the state of Missouri and is valid at this time.

District 5520 is covered by the general liability insurance policy provided by Rotary International. Youth Exchange students must be covered by an individual liability policy during the terms of their exchange. District 5520 may purchase additional coverage as it deems necessary at any time.

### 4. Club Compliance

The district governor is responsible for supervision and control of all youth activities in the district, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange. District 5520 will monitor all participating clubs and ensure that they comply with the District's youth protection policies and procedures and Rotary Youth Exchange certification requirements for all clubs that participate in Rotary Youth Exchange must provide the district with a copy of the following for review and approval:

- A signed compliance statement that the club is operating its program in accordance with District 5520 and RI policies
- Confirmation that volunteers will be prohibited from contact with program participants until a written application, interview, reference check, and criminal background check have been conducted and clearance for unsupervised contact with program participants has been issued
- All club materials that advertise the Youth Exchange program, including brochures, applications, policies, and websites
- Any club youth-protection training materials

Participants in District 5520's youth programs will be provided a comprehensive list of youth protection services in the area. This list will include contact information for relevant state and law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, mental health, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, and rape and suicide prevention hotlines.

## 5. Volunteer Selection and Screening

All Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers interested in working with youth program participants must meet RI and district eligibility requirements. RI prohibits the membership and participation of any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment.

If a person is accused of sexual abuse or harassment and the law enforcement investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, additional safeguards are necessary to protect any youth program participants with whom the accused may have future contact, as well as the accused. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated as a youth program volunteer. Reinstatement is not a right, and reinstatement to his or her former position is not guaranteed.

All Rotarians and non-Rotarian volunteers that have direct, unsupervised contact with youth program participants must:

- Complete a volunteer agreement form
- Undergo a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices)
- Be interviewed, preferably in person
- Provide a list of personal references with contact information (it's recommended that references include no family members and no more than one Rotarian)
- Comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Exchange program

Youth Exchange host families must also meet these selection and screening requirements:

- Undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability, demonstrating:
  - Commitment to the safety and security of students
  - Appropriate motives for hosting a student that are consistent with Rotary 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
- Complete a written application
- Undergo home visits with and without notice, both before and during the placement; home visits must be conducted annually, even for repeat host families

Note: All adult residents of the host home must meet all selection and screening guidelines. This includes adult children of the host family and other members of the extended family or household staff who are full-time or part-time residents of the home.

Youth Exchange students must be appointed a Rotarian counselor who meets the criteria for all volunteers. Also:

- A counselor must not be a member of the student's host family. It is also recommended that counselors not hold another role of authority with respect to the student's exchange (e.g., school principal, club president, district Youth Exchange chair).
- Counselors must be able to respond to any problems or concerns that may arise, including instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment.

## **6. Participant Selection and Screening**

All students interested in the District 5520 Youth Exchange program must meet district criteria and:

- Complete a written application
- Be interviewed at the club and district levels
- Attend and participate in all club and district orientation and training sessions

Parents or legal guardians of outbound Youth Exchange participants must also be interviewed at the club and district level to determine the student's suitability for program participation.

## **7. Training**

District 5520 must provide youth-protection training and information to all youth program participants and volunteers. District 5520 will conduct the training sessions. Training may be provided in person, by webinars or on-line. Specifically, District 5520 will:

- Adapt Rotary's Youth Protection Guide to reflect district guidelines, information on local customs and culture, and legal requirements
- Develop a training schedule that specifies who will be trained, how often, and how
- Conduct specialized training for those involved in all District Youth Programs:
  - District Governor
  - All District Leadership including Lieutenant Governors, Assistant Governors, Youth Program Chairs and their committees
  - All RYLA adult leaders/counselors and junior counselors
  - All Interact adult leaders
  - All Club Youth Program leaders and committees
  - District Youth Exchange officer and committee members
  - Club Youth Exchange officer and committee members
  - Rotarian counselors
  - Other Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Youth Exchange activities, such as local tours or district events
  - Host families including parents and siblings
  - Students (outbound and inbound)
- Maintain records of participation to ensure compliance

## **8. Allegation Handling and Follow-Through**

District 5520 takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will handle them in accordance with the Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines.

The district will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and legal investigations and will not interfere with official investigations when conducting its own independent review.

District 5520 may appoint a youth protection officer or district review committee to evaluate and review files, policies, and allegations regularly.

## **9. Travel and Transportation**

Youth travel outside of the local community must comply with youth protection policies.

For all youth travel sponsored by District 5520 or its clubs, the following will be done before departure:

- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of program participants
- Give parents and legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information
- When traveling outside District 5520, verify that program participants have adequate insurance, including benefits for medical services, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability. For the travel of Youth Exchange students outside their host communities, either with their host families or to attend Rotary events, District 5520, through coordination with the hosting or sponsoring Rotary Club, shall obtain written permission from the students' parents, legal guardians or the District Youth Exchange Chair.

Travel for Youth Exchange participants are regulated by additional requirements. Complete guidelines are provided on District 5520's Youth Exchange website.

For all other Youth Exchange student travel that is not customarily a part of the exchange program, organizers must:

- Receive authorization from District 5520 in advance
- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians for travel outside of the local host community
- Provide parents or legal guardians details about the trip, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information

Transportation Policy – District 5520's Transportation Policies are contained in Document # 01.1.

## **10. District 5520 Youth Exchange Administration**

The District 5520 Youth Exchange program, in collaboration with participating clubs, must also:

- District 5520 requires that every inbound and outbound student purchase an insurance policy which meets current R.I. minimum coverage requirements and requires that the student provide the policy number for the district records.
- Store participant and volunteer records securely at the residence or office of the youth program's local coordinator for one year after the student has returned home and insure before destruction that required records were successfully placed in the Rotary Youth Exchange Document Storage (RYEDS) for long-term storage, in accordance with all applicable privacy laws.
- Provide each student a list of local services (rape and suicide crisis hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs, relevant law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.). This list must include the following district and club contacts:
  - For inbound students: Rotarian counselor, host club president, host district Youth Exchange chair, and host district governor
  - For outbound students: Rotarian counselor, sponsor club president, sponsor district Youth Exchange chair, sponsor district governor
- Provide each inbound student with the names and contact information of at least two non-Rotarian resource people – one male and one female, who are not related to each other and do not have close ties to the host families or Rotarian counselor – who can help the students with any problems.
- Submit inbound program participants' data to RI before or shortly after the exchange begins.
- Provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number to inbound students.

- Report all serious incidents (abuse or harassment allegations, accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to RI Youth Exchange staff within 72 hours.
- Prohibit placement of students outside of the district Youth Exchange program structure (“backdoor” exchanges).
- Establish criteria and procedures for an inbound student’s removal from the host family and arrange for contingency, temporary housing in advance.
- Develop contingency inbound hosting plans that include prescreened families.
- Ensure that all inbound hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host inbound students.
- Ensure that long-term, inbound program participants have multiple host families. It is recommended that long-term program participants be placed with three host families during their exchange.
- Conduct follow-up evaluations of both students and inbound host families.
- Request a monthly report from each inbound and outbound program participant that includes information on current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. The district Youth Exchange chair or country contact can then review the reports and assist program participants as needed.

### **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL’S STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH**

Rotary International 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 emotional abuse.

*Adopted by the RI Board of Directors, November 2006*