



ROTARY **YOUTH PROTECTION** **GUIDE**



The Rotary Youth Protection Guide is a comprehensive manual to providing a safe and secure environment for all young people involved in Rotary programs and activities. It includes guidelines for developing, implementing, and maintaining an effective district youth protection program. The methods described in this guide can be modified to comply with local laws and should be used in combination with other locally developed training resources.

District governors, district youth protection officers, and all club and district leaders involved in Interact, RYLA, or Rotary Youth Exchange should review this guide. Districts may also apply these guidelines to other youth activities or when working with any vulnerable population.

The information in this publication comes in part from the efforts and experiences of Rotary members and reflects the best practices of Rotary districts. Policy references are to the Rotary Code of Policies. Any decisions made by the Rotary International Board of Directors take precedence over information in this publication.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction to Youth Protection

Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth	1
Understanding the Terms	2

2. Leadership and Positions of Responsibility

District Governor	4
District Program Chairs	4
District Youth Protection Officer	5
Club Presidents, Club Program Chairs, and Other Club Officers	5
Everyone's Role	5

3. Youth Protection Procedures

Youth Protection Policies	7
Volunteer Selection and Screening	8
Volunteer Training	10
Monitoring and Supervision	11
Participant Support	11
Document Retention and Information Privacy	12
Incorporation and Insurance	12
Youth Travel	13
Overnight Activities	14
Online Safety	15
Crisis Management	15

4. Awareness and Prevention

Creating a Culture of Safety	17
Appropriate Boundaries Between Adults and Youth	17
Appropriate Boundaries Among Participants	20
Recognizing Abuse and Harassment	21
Recognizing Offenders	23
Recognizing Grooming Behavior	23
Community Grooming	24

5. Responding and Reporting

Why Responding Is Important	25
How to Respond to Inappropriate Behavior by Adults	25
How to Respond to Inappropriate Behavior by Youth	26
Responding to a Report of Abuse or Harassment	26
Barriers to Reporting	29

Appendix A.

Sample District Youth Protection Policy	31
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Appendix B.

Sample Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines	35
--	----

Appendix C.

Sample Youth Program Volunteer Application	38
--	----

Appendix D.

Sample Youth Program Volunteer Interview Questions	43
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Appendix E.

Sample Questions for Youth Program Volunteers' References	45
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Appendix F.

Additional Resources	47
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1

INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH PROTECTION



Rotary has a long history of providing service to youth. Each year, more than 300,000 young people participate in Rotary programs like Interact, Rotary Youth Exchange, and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA). Many club and district mentoring programs, immunization efforts, job training programs, literacy projects, and other initiatives also help young people or other vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, no organization or program is invulnerable to abuse or crises. They can and do occur in even the most seemingly positive settings. Predators often seek teaching, coaching, or other positions that give them access to children and teenagers. Others who are committed to working with youth sometimes find it hard to believe that some adults will abuse the trust placed in them, so they may not notice the signs. Rotary takes youth protection very seriously, and it relies on our members to foster safe environments that prevent abuse and to respond appropriately when it occurs.

Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth

The statement of conduct provides the basic principle to follow when working with young people in any capacity:

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 with whom they come into contact and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

This principle must be followed throughout Rotary, including by our districts, clubs, Rotary members, and other volunteers at all levels, as well as in our materials, programs, and communications with parents and guardians.

Rotary reinforces the Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth with additional policies that set the safety of young people as our first priority. They require districts and clubs to adhere to local youth protection laws and procedures and to set expectations for responding to any concerns or allegations that arise. These policies apply to any Rotary activity or program that involves youth.

Rotary Youth Exchange policies address the additional risks that this program carries. The district certification process provides extra safeguards and promotes consistency among district partners. In order to participate in Rotary Youth Exchange, districts must demonstrate compliance with all of the certification requirements listed in the **Rotary Code of Policies** sections on Youth Protection and Rotary Youth Exchange. For more information about certification requirements, write to youthexchange@rotary.org.

Adopting sensible procedures and following guidelines protects both program participants and volunteers and enables programs to accomplish their missions and objectives. Controls at the district level, through a district youth protection policy, and similar controls at the club level:

- Demonstrate Rotary's commitment to youth
- Prevent incidents of abuse or mitigate their effects
- Protect the long-term viability of youth programs
- Strengthen the trust of participants and their families

Understanding the Terms

Throughout this guide, some terms will be used in specialized ways. It's important to understand these terms in order to fully understand how to create comprehensive policies, training plans, and response mechanisms. Discuss these and other terms that people in your area may use in talking about these and related concepts. Because these topics may be difficult to discuss, it is especially important that everyone has the same understanding of the terms and is comfortable and confident using them to describe inappropriate behavior or possible abuse. This guide will explain some of these terms in greater detail in later chapters.

Volunteer — Any adult involved in Rotary youth activities who interacts directly with young people, whether supervised or unsupervised. For Rotary's youth programs, volunteers include:

- Club and district Youth Exchange officers and committee members
- Program counselors or advisers
- Members and nonmembers and their spouses and partners who have contact with participants during activities or outings or who transport participants to events
- Rotary Youth Exchange host parents and other adult residents of host homes, including host siblings and other family members
- Youth programs alumni who assist in the administration of a youth program

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

Offender — Anyone who commits an act of abuse or harassment. Other terms used to describe offenders include predator, child abuser, child molester, or pedophile.

Accused person — Someone alleged to have committed abuse or harassment can be called an accused person while the matter is still under investigation.

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, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Physical abuse — Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

Neglect — Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical or emotional care that is necessary to well-being.

Consent — An informed, knowing, and voluntary decision to engage in an activity or behavior.

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 don't involve touching, such as voyeurism, indecent exposure, stalking, electronic harassment, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

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:

- 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

- Giving private or secret gifts, including those of a sexual nature
- Verbal comments or statements of a sexual nature
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
- Requests for sexual acts
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Inappropriate physical contact, such as intentionally brushing against a person
- Obscene language or gestures
- Suggestive or insulting comments

Grooming — Establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive.

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.

2

LEADERSHIP AND POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY



Skilled leadership is critical to creating an environment that focuses on child safety. Youth protection is the responsibility of all adults involved in youth programs, but compliance with Rotary International (RI) and district policies depends especially on the vigilance of the district governor, various district program chairs, the district youth protection officer, club presidents, and club youth program chairs. They should coordinate their efforts to raise awareness of youth safety issues and develop and implement youth protection procedures.

District Governor

The district governor is responsible for the supervision and control of district programs, including all youth programs and activities. District chairs and other volunteers are supervised by their governors and report to them. Given the sensitive nature of youth programs, governors are required to complete youth protection training as determined by Rotary's general secretary. They are also encouraged to use the time before they take office to learn as much as possible about the programs their districts participate in.

A district governor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the district has a youth protection policy that complies with the **Rotary Code of Policies** for all youth programs, including Rotary Youth Exchange, and having a local legal professional check that they comply with local laws
- Working with district committees to make sure that the policy is followed throughout the district and that all abuse or harassment allegations and other crises are handled appropriately
- If necessary, intervening to administer youth programs, even if those responsibilities had been delegated to other district and club officers
- Establishing a committee or process to closely review behavior, legal charges, and convictions that, even if they are not directly related to a youth protection violation, might otherwise disqualify a volunteer from working with young people

District Program Chairs

Each year, the district governor should appoint or reappoint a chair for each youth program the district participates in. A program chair monitors and directs program activity at the club and district levels and serves as a resource and contact person for clubs. One person can serve as chair for multiple years; however, having an effective succession plan is key to consistent program management.

A district youth program chair should:

- Know all RI and district youth protection policies and program operations and ensure that district and club programs meet all policy requirements
- Assist with club training, participant screening and selection, program logistics, and risk management
- Develop an effective support system for youth, encouraging them to report and cope effectively with challenges
- Communicate with national and international contacts about program challenges and successes and serve as a liaison between clubs
- Coordinate with the district youth protection officer (or governor) to respond immediately and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, or other crises
- Keep the district governor informed about youth program activities

Districts are encouraged to establish advisory roles for former program chairs so they may continue to offer their experience and knowledge to youth activities. The district may or may not officially recognize such roles.

EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING

District governors should plan for continuity when making committee appointments. Because of the special knowledge and experience that administering youth programs requires, it is highly recommended that districts use a leadership succession plan to draw from the expertise of experienced committee members and develop leaders within the committee. The plan should also arrange for an overlap period, so that incoming youth program chairs learn important procedures and policies from their predecessors.

District Youth Protection Officer

It is strongly recommended that district governors appoint a youth protection officer to foster safe operations across all youth programs. The officer should be a resource on abuse, harassment, and other risks and crises. This person should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development.

A youth protection officer should:

- 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 governor and district program chairs about them
- Work with the district and clubs to inform all Rotary members of their youth protection obligations
- Confirm that appropriate screening measures are used for all youth programs, in compliance with Rotary policies and local laws
- Direct the selection of Rotary member and nonmember volunteers and make sure that volunteer screening is documented appropriately
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to Rotary members, other volunteers, and youth program participants and their parents
- Oversee the proper handling of allegations, harassment, or other crises, and protect the interests of all who are involved

- 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
- Make sure those prohibitions are applied each year, even as leaders change

Sometimes the unexpected happens: a serious earthquake, a train collision, an act of terrorism, civil unrest, or an act of violence in a school. A youth protection officer should consider what the district would do in one of these emergencies and how it could best keep program participants safe and all necessary parties, including participants' parents or legal guardians, notified.

Club Presidents, Club Program 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:

- 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
- Implement required training, screening, program logistics, and risk management procedures
- Engage regularly with youth program participants to get feedback on the programs
- 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

Everyone's Role

Strong support and effective management of youth programs throughout the club are essential to ensuring that all youth protection policies, including district procedures, RI policies, and local laws and regulations, are followed. All club-level volunteers and program officers must understand Rotary and district policies and work with their club presidents to promptly communicate all youth protection concerns to district leaders and/or local law enforcement.

Those who have admitted to, have been convicted of, or are known to have engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment of a youth or program participant are ineligible for Rotary membership — even if these crimes were committed long ago. Any volunteer who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise known to have engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment or other act that violates the accepted standard of behavior in the community must be prohibited from working with youths through Rotary.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL STAFF

Staff members at the Rotary International (RI) Secretariat support districts that work with Interact, RYLA, and Rotary Youth Exchange and assist districts and clubs in youth protection matters. The Secretariat's role includes enforcing Rotary policies, assisting districts in communicating with their partners abroad, ensuring reports to local law enforcement, helping respond to media inquiries, and providing general guidance to clubs and districts facing difficult situations involving participants.

Contact staff members directly with any questions about RI policies, or for assistance with media relations, at [**youthprotection@rotary.org**](mailto:youthprotection@rotary.org).

3

YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES



Youth Protection Policies

Each Rotary district that participates in youth programs must develop procedures and policies that comply with the **Rotary Code of Policies** and Rotary's Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth. They include guidelines for Rotary-sponsored travel by young people.

Although your district may wish to develop one youth protection policy for all of its youth programs, remember that each program has unique aspects to consider. Rotary Youth Exchange, for example, requires districts to meet RI certification requirements before they can participate in the program. (See the **Rotary Code of Policies** section on Youth Exchange.)

A youth program policy should not only cover critical youth protection procedures but also provide more general program operation guidelines so that all volunteers, program participants, and participants' families fully understand the expectations. District youth protection policies should address foreseeable risks. Risks associated with the program's environment should be considered, along with plans for mitigating them. Determine what Rotary members need to know to operate youth programs in accordance with RI policies, and train them accordingly.

An effective district youth protection policy includes:

- A policy statement that includes Rotary's Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth
- Procedures for ensuring that clubs comply with district and Rotary International requirements
- Criteria and procedures for screening and selecting volunteers
- Procedures for training volunteers who work with youth

- Procedures for providing participants with a support network and resources
- A system to manage program documentation and maintain confidential records
- Guidelines for reporting and investigating suspected abuse or harassment, allegations, and confirmed incidents
- A disciplinary policy for addressing individuals who exhibit inappropriate behavior
- Procedures for managing crises, including a communication plan
- Policies on how to safely store electronic data and the personal information of volunteers and participants
- Practices for managing the risks associated with participants' travel, including supervision and monitoring expectations



Each Rotary district is responsible for ensuring that all clubs comply with Rotary policies and local laws. Noncompliance can have serious consequences, including the termination of an individual's membership or a club's charter or the suspension of the entire district's program activities.

Review the Sample District Youth Protection Policy (appendix A). Policies will vary with the type and size of the youth programs and local governing laws. Thoroughly consider laws that affect program operations and incorporate any necessary information into your district policy.

Volunteer Selection and Screening

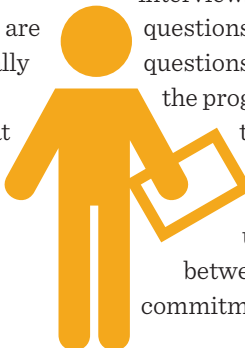
No volunteer screening method can eliminate the possibility of abuse and harassment, but a thorough process can identify applicants with a history of inappropriate conduct and deter dangerous people from applying or gaining access to young people. A rigorous screening and selection process signifies to potential applicants that you are committed to youth protection and gives participants, parents, and other community members confidence that you are doing everything possible to keep children safe. Appropriate levels of screening may vary depending on:

- The volunteer position and whether it has direct authority over the youth program and the well-being of participants
- The amount or frequency of contact with participants, from incidental or infrequent to regular or significant
- The type of contact, such as group interactions, overnight supervision, or unsupervised individual contact

For example, Youth Exchange host families are screened more thoroughly than tutors who volunteer in a group setting at a local elementary school. Local laws may also require certain screening practices, like criminal background checks for volunteers involved in overnight stays. Check with a local legal authority or other youth-serving organizations to find out if your community has any standard of care that exceeds Rotary's minimum requirements.

Appropriate screening measures are strongly recommended for all activities that serve young people. Comprehensive screening is essential for activities that allow adults (Rotary members or non-Rotary volunteers) significant and unsupervised contact with youth, like Rotary Youth Exchange.

The following screening and selection procedures are designed to work together to uncover any potentially concerning information, and should be conducted for all adults who volunteer in youth programs that are administered by clubs and districts.



Written application. An application should include:

- The applicant's contact information
- Personal references and contact information for them
- A statement that the applicant has no criminal convictions or pending charges related to abuse or harassment
- A section that explains any past charges of abuse or harassment
- A signed waiver of liability
- Either permission for the club or district to obtain a criminal background check or confirmation that the applicant will obtain and submit one on their own

See appendix C for a sample volunteer application that you can customize. Also consider asking applicants about their interest and expertise related to the volunteer position and their experience working with young people.



Look for specific items on an application that may require follow-up or further explanation, such as an excessive interest in working with young people (especially of a certain age or gender), gaps in employment, frequent moves, or failure to complete the entire application. Although these don't necessarily indicate a threat, don't be afraid to ask for more information to make sure you're not overlooking a potential risk.

Interviews. Rotary members who have professional credentials in working with youth or experience with Rotary's youth programs should conduct in-person interviews. Follow an established list of relevant questions and ask every potential volunteer the same questions, regardless of how familiar they are with the program or with Rotary. Not only is it important that youth program volunteers be dependable, supportive, and patient, they must also practice good judgment, demonstrate an understanding of appropriate boundaries between adults and young people, and show a commitment to following youth protection policies.



Asking applicants directly if they have ever abused or molested a child or adult may be uncomfortable, but doing so emphasizes that your club or district takes abuse and harassment seriously. Pay attention to how applicants respond. If they become defensive or evasive, you may want to consider taking a more extensive look at the person's history. Depending on the culture, a simple and emphatic no can be the most appropriate response. If the applicant is upset by the question, simply say that asking directly is a surprisingly effective deterrent in screening for potentially dangerous people. Consult with local youth protection experts to identify the most appropriate way to broach this subject, and what types of potential responses may require additional follow up.

Reference checks. You can check references by phone or in person. Use a standard set of questions that ask how long and in what capacity the references have known the applicant, whether they believe the applicant is well-qualified to work with young people, and whether they have any reservations about recommending the applicant as a volunteer with youth programs. See appendix C for a sample reference form and appendix E for suggested questions to ask the references.

Do not skip reference checks just because the applicant has been involved in Rotary or has served as a volunteer for another youth-serving organization. We still recommend that you contact at least three references. They should not be members of the applicant's family, and no more than one should be a Rotary member. Record the date of the conversation and a summary of the volunteer's response to each question.



Pay careful attention if you encounter a reference who is reluctant to participate, gives information that conflicts with anything the applicant has said, is evasive when asked certain questions, does not seem to know the applicant very well, or has only a short-term or surface-level relationship with the applicant. Any of these are concerning responses and should be addressed thoroughly with the applicant.

Criminal background checks and criminal record checks.

Background checks are a critical part of any youth protection policy because they deter potential offenders and detect known offenders. Many youth-serving organizations require a criminal background check for all adult volunteers who work with youth, even for programs that don't involve unsupervised access to young people.

Checks are typically administered by a government agency for a small fee, but in some areas they are administered by private companies. In some cases, local law prohibits a third party from conducting a background check on a volunteer. In such instances, it may be possible for volunteers to request background checks on themselves and provide detailed documentation to the club or district. If it is legally impossible to require criminal background checks through any means, use alternative screening and monitoring procedures. These can include increasing supervision of the person's contact with participants, checking additional references, interviewing volunteers more thoroughly, and adding additional statements to the volunteer application regarding a person's work with youth programs and suitability for the volunteer role.

It is best to check your volunteers' criminal background thoroughly at least every two years. It is also best to include the following in background checks, when possible:

- A search of criminal records in multiple states, provinces, or territories
- A government-issued identification check
- An alias search
- A search in every jurisdiction the applicant has lived over the last seven years
- A national fingerprint-based search



Don't rely on a criminal background check alone. It should be one of your many tools that can tell you whether a volunteer is suitable for a position working with young people. Dangerous people, and even repeat abusers, may not have criminal backgrounds if they have never been caught or have never been prosecuted.

Home visits. Families that host Youth Exchange students must be visited at their homes before and during an exchange. To evaluate the day-to-day living conditions, some visits must occur with no warning or with only limited notice.

Other considerations. Volunteering in Rotary youth programs is a privilege, not a right. District and club officers have a responsibility to select only volunteers who meet established criteria. They should thoroughly and regularly evaluate the suitability of adults who have significant unsupervised contact with youth, including Rotarians, Rotaractors, Rotary members' family members, and other non-Rotary members. They should also consider all aspects of the screening process, including the application, interviews, background checks, and reference checks, during the selection process. Adult volunteers who are unwilling to be screened should be excluded from Rotary youth programs.

Rotary International prohibits anyone who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise been found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment from participating in youth programs ([Rotary Code of Policies](#), Youth Protection section). Each district should consider, in light of local law and practice, what other charges or convictions would disqualify a volunteer. For example, a district may exclude anyone convicted of financial impropriety from roles that give access to district funds. Districts should also closely review offenses like theft, fraud, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It's also a good idea to establish a procedure for addressing disputes over the outcomes of criminal background checks.

Rotary encourages districts to develop a less formal screening process for adults who will have infrequent or indirect contact with youth program participants. One example would be if a Youth Exchange student were invited to spend the night or weekend with the family of a school friend. Each district uses its judgment in authorizing such an arrangement, in accordance with local laws and practices.

Volunteer Training

A strong youth protection policy can fail if volunteers are not properly trained. Training is essential not just because it teaches volunteers how they can help keep young people safe but also because it conveys and cultivates a commitment to protecting youth.

All volunteers should learn about these topics:

- How sexual offenders behave and how they manipulate others
- How to recognize abuse and harassment
- How to behave in ways that keep participants from feeling uncomfortable
- How volunteers can protect themselves from false allegations by following guidelines for appropriate behavior
- How to recognize grooming behavior and respond to it
- How to report alleged or suspected abuse or harassment, or behavior that causes concern, to district leaders and RI

In order for training to be effective, it needs to be specific, frequent, and applicable to the program and the volunteer's role.

Design training that's specific to each program role, and include abuse, harassment, and crisis prevention information in all sessions. Use a variety of formats that fit your volunteers' learning needs (online, in-person, print, etc.). Make sure that volunteers know appropriate boundaries for physical, electronic, and verbal interactions between adults and youth, and between peers.

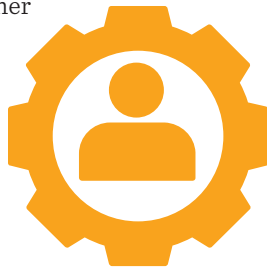
Districts should customize the content to reflect their cultures, their policies, and other program specifics. It's also helpful to develop detailed descriptions of your program's key roles, such as district youth protection officer, district program chairs, and Rotary counselors, to ensure that Rotary members and other volunteers understand their responsibilities before they accept a role and are committed to fulfilling their obligations.



If an incident that involves young people does occur or is narrowly avoided, that may indicate that additional training is needed. Training can be an important tool for responding to concerns, recognizing new trends that might jeopardize participants' safety, or sharing the best practices and support.

Monitoring and Supervision

Creating a culture of accountability by supervising volunteers and participants closely can help keep young people safe and prevent false allegations. When people know they are being supervised or monitored, they are less likely to interact inappropriately. You'll need a plan to monitor youth programs, whether you do it by making unscheduled visits to observe Interact club activities or overnight RYLA or visiting Youth Exchange families. Here are some considerations:



Document. Keeping good records of your visits is essential. Include your arrival and departure times, who was present, and a summary of what you observed.

Vary your observation or visiting schedule.

It is best to conduct both planned and unplanned observations. Avoid developing patterns that can be predicted, because they may not allow you to see genuine program conditions or volunteer and youth interactions.

Consider the environment. Determine whether the location is suitable and safe for the activity taking place there.

Pay extra attention to sensitive activities. Make sure volunteers and youth are complying with policies about sensitive matters like sleeping arrangements and use of toilet or shower facilities.

Check for adequate adult supervision. Check whether the minimum number of adults for the size of the group are present and involved.

Observe interactions. Confirm that young people and adults are behaving appropriately. Interrupt and document any inappropriate behavior and follow the process outlined in your policies after you finish your observation.

Ask for feedback. It's difficult to observe all activities or events. Develop ways for participants and volunteers to send you their opinions. Anonymous surveys and even informal conversations can give you a sense of whether policies and procedures are being followed.

Give feedback. If you notice something inappropriate, address it immediately so that the behavior stops. And always be sure to reinforce good behavior.

Participant Support

Participants in Rotary youth programs should have access to a support network and informational resources.

Abuse and harassment awareness. Young people must receive age-appropriate information that will help them recognize and resist abuse and harassment and, when necessary, feel comfortable reporting problems. Training resources should help participants understand their own boundaries and empower them to express confidently to others when they have been crossed. Their parents or legal guardians should receive this information, too, so that they'll understand the expectations and how to keep their children safe.

Alumni participation. When it's appropriate, use the skills and experience of former program participants by asking them to assist with training. The critical issues that adolescents face, including peer pressure and preventing abuse and harassment, can resonate more strongly with young people when they're discussed by others closer to their age. Program alumni understand what it's like to participate in Rotary's programs, and they may also be more attuned to current challenges that other young people might face at school or in social situations.

Support resources. Having information on what to do and who to contact in an emergency will help participants and their parents feel prepared. Provide contact information for key male and female program volunteers and both Rotary and non-Rotary volunteers (like school counselors, teachers, or former program participants). Include a hotline or website that can refer participants to local services, including rape crisis counseling, suicide intervention, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning) support, alcohol and drug awareness programs, and relevant law enforcement agencies, if possible. Establish an emergency phone line or develop a system in which someone is always available to support participants.

Rotary counselors. Each Rotary Youth Exchange student is assigned a member of the host club to serve as a counselor. The counselor should be the same gender as the participant. He or she communicates with students regularly and serves as a liaison between students and club or district leaders. Make it clear to all counselors that they are advocates for the students. They can't be members of their students' host families, nor can they hold a position of authority over the exchange, such as school principal or club Youth Exchange officer.

Document Retention and Information Privacy

Districts determine how to handle and retain important youth program documentation, such as training logs, volunteer-screening records, and incident reports. Important considerations include whether documentation will be stored at the club or district level, how long it will be kept, and who will have access to it. Research local laws or consult a local legal adviser to set guidelines for managing and retaining documentation.

To protect people's privacy, allow access to sensitive information only to those who need it. Districts should securely maintain all records of background checks, waivers, and screenings according to their document-retention policies and applicable local laws. Ensure that document-retention policies allow districts as much information as possible in the event that abuse or harassment is reported many years later. Local statutes

of limitations should inform record retention. Critical information about any incidents should be stored carefully and shared only as required by changes in program leadership.

Districts must develop and follow a process for keeping confidential records about anyone who is prohibited from working with youth or from membership in Rotary. As district leaders change, it is critical that incoming leaders know that they are responsible for managing these records and consistently enforcing prohibitions within the district, including after redistricting.

Sensitive data includes participants' and volunteers' personally identifiable information, financial information, and volunteer applications and criminal background reports. Access to this information must be granted only to those who have successfully completed a thorough screening and who need the information for their roles in administering the program, such as the club Youth Exchange officer who screens host families. If your district has a website that includes participants' contact information, be sure that this section of the site is password-protected and accessible only to those in appropriate volunteer roles.

Clubs and districts should also consider obtaining written permission from parents or legal guardians to take and use photographs or videos of participants, to collect and retain their personally identifying information, and to use social media, websites, or other forms of electronic communication with them.

Incorporation and Insurance

The top priority of youth protection is the safety and well-being of program participants, but it's also a good idea to implement measures to protect volunteers and minimize their exposure to risk.

Legal entity. Forming a separate legal entity can protect the district, its volunteers, and the district youth programs themselves to some degree. Youth programs can be incorporated together or individually, or a formal legal entity can be established for the district or a multidistrict youth program organization. If districts decide to incorporate their youth programs separately, or incorporate a multidistrict entity, it is important for the governor or an appointed representative to serve on that legal entity's board. Rotary International has district and multidistrict incorporation policies to preserve districts' authority over these corporations and to protect their officers. If you have questions on these policies, contact your **Club and District Support representative** at Rotary International.

Liability insurance. Liability insurance protects an organization from claims and lawsuits alleging negligence by that organization, its employees, or its volunteers. Consult with a local insurance professional to determine the appropriate amount of coverage. At a minimum, this insurance should cover claims that arise from bodily injury or property damage. All U.S. Rotary clubs and districts are automatically provided with liability insurance; clubs and districts outside of the U.S. need to get their own coverage. Regardless of their location, Youth Exchange host families should also protect themselves by having personal liability insurance.

Legal documentation. Rotary youth programs should also require the parents or legal guardians of minors to give written permission for their children to participate. This permission offers organizations some legal protection and ensures that parents or legal guardians consent to program participation.

Multinational districts sometimes face challenges in forming a separate legal entity and purchasing general liability insurance. Although all districts are encouraged to consult local legal and insurance professionals, it is especially important for multinational districts to seek professional advice to determine how to protect all participating areas of the district.



Youth Travel

Rotary clubs and districts may offer participants opportunities to travel outside of their home communities. The most obvious example is a Rotary Youth Exchange. Others include a service-learning trip for Interactors or an international RYLA camp. While these experiences enrich the lives of young people, all travel has inherent risks, for both the participants and the Rotary clubs and districts that are involved.

Adults should never transport a single participant in a motor vehicle without the prior and express permission of the participant's parent or legal guardian.

At a minimum, organizers are required to obtain written permission from parents or legal guardians and to give them program details. Such permission is often given by email, but districts may also decide to require other documentation. When youth program participants travel out of the country or more than 240 kilometers, or 150 miles, from the home residence, they should have adequate insurance for the duration of the trip, including coverage of emergency medical care and evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability, in amounts satisfactory to the club or district that organizes the travel.

However, when youth travel is organized or administered by a foreign club or district, such as when Rotary members in a foreign city are asked to host youth participants or arrange for their hosting, this functions as a Youth Exchange activity. These activities entail particular risks and responsibilities and must be administered through the district Youth Exchange committee, with all participating clubs and districts meeting the **Rotary Code of Policies** certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange.

Overnight Activities

Youth travel or other activities that involve overnight stays require additional caution. They present unique risks to youth and volunteers because they often involve changing clothes, showering, unstructured time, and mixing participants of different genders or ages. As a result, they require increased supervision.

In addition to enforcing Rotary policies on youth travel, districts or clubs that organize overnight activities should also follow these guidelines for overnight supervision, facilities, and sleeping arrangements.

SUPERVISION

- Screen and train all adult volunteers who will stay overnight with young people in advance. Talk about safety procedures, abuse prevention, and emergency and crisis management.
- Prevent all unsupervised individual contact, including contact between young people or contact between a young person and an adult. Either have at least two youth participants present if there will be only one adult volunteer, or have two adults accompany one youth.
- Hold a meeting with all volunteers to review policies and procedures and discuss the general risks of overnight trips as well as risks specific to the activity.
- Set appropriate supervision ratios before the activity and make sure there will be enough volunteers for proper supervision.
- Assign volunteers specific groups of participants to supervise. They should account for everyone in their groups regularly throughout the activity.
- Have volunteers sleep in shifts so they can supervise participants during sleeping hours.

FACILITIES

- Clearly define the physical boundaries of the facility and/or area where the overnight activity will take place. Show them to volunteers and youth program participants.
- Assign volunteers to monitor high-risk areas, such as toilets, entrances, exits, hallways, stairwells, unlocked rooms, classrooms, offices, or out-of-the-way locations.
- Establish safety procedures for showering and using toilet facilities. For example, if many participants need to use the toilets at the same time, allow only one participant at a time in each stall, and plan to have different age groups use the toilet facilities at different times. Adult volunteers should never shower or use the toilets with participants but should supervise from outside the bathroom or shower area.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

- Whenever possible, arrange sleeping areas by sex and age. It is also important to consider participants' gender identity and sexual orientation, and work with their parents or legal guardians to make arrangements that meet everyone's needs.
- Participants should always have their own beds, and volunteers should have their own rooms when possible. If sharing rooms can't be avoided, make sure there are enough adults to supervise the participants, don't let one participant and one adult share a sleeping area, and make sure youth and adults change clothes and use toilet facilities separately.

Consult with local youth-serving organizations to determine the standards of care where you live and learn more of the best practices related to overnight stays.

Online Safety

The internet can be a powerful tool, especially for youth programs. It can be used to promote programs, to communicate with friends and families while abroad, and even to collect and store volunteer and participant information. It also poses a number of risks that participants should be aware of. Because technology changes rapidly, no single policy could cover the range of issues related to internet use. Each program should consider the potential risks and then develop policies to address them. Consider whether internet use might compromise the safety of volunteers or participants in any of these ways:

Physical safety — their freedom from physical harm or danger

Psychological safety — their freedom from cruelty, harassment, and exposure to possibly disturbing material

Reputational and legal safety — their freedom from unwanted social, academic, professional, and legal consequences

Identity, property, and community safety — their freedom from theft of identity or property

By developing an online safety policy that specifies how to manage online data and internet use, the program can identify risks and the measures necessary to avoid them.

For example, since most internet content is in the public domain, what measures could mitigate youth participants' and volunteers' reputational or legal risk? One solution is to train them in how to use social media websites and educate them on the risks of posting content that could undermine their reputation or increase their liability. It is the responsibility of those who administer youth programs to understand local laws related to data privacy and internet use that involves minors and to see that program participants obey them.

For school-based Interact clubs, sponsors are encouraged to adopt the school's internet or communication policies.

If you're ever in doubt about whether information related to youth programs or participants is appropriate to email or post publicly, here are some guidelines to consider:

- Photos or personal information about a youth program participant should never be shared without the express permission and knowledge of their parent or legal guardian.
- Stories about and images of youth program participants should not be shared or posted until they have completed their program or activity or become legal adults.
- Never tag a minor or share their user name or handle online. This could threaten their safety by revealing their interests, including locations they visit often.



Crisis Management

Though emergency situations are rare, youth program participants may be especially vulnerable during natural and human-caused crises. A crisis can

develop when you least expect it and demands an immediate response, so preparation is essential.

Be aware of possible threats to participants so you can plan in advance how you would respond to each.

TYPES OF CRISES

Accidents. Transportation crashes, poisoning, house fires, falls, etc., that require serious medical attention.

Violence. Violent physical or verbal acts that may be random or may target individuals or groups based on their gender, ethnicity, background, or associations.

Natural disasters. Different regions of the world are susceptible to various natural hazards, including wildfires, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

Political instability. Ongoing government instability, or a sudden rebellion or revolution, can lead to riots and other violence.

Outbreak of illness. An epidemic is an outbreak of a contractible disease that spreads at an abnormal rate. A pandemic is an epidemic whose spread is global. Rotary strongly recommends that all districts have a crisis-management plan, and this is especially relevant for youth programs, given the vulnerability of their participants. Preparation helps Rotary members effectively and efficiently respond to an event, minimize its impact, reassure all who are involved, and recover.

A crisis may be widespread or may directly affect just one person. People may even be affected by a crisis that occurs far away. What is common to all crises is that they cause stress, disruption, and pain.

DEVELOPING A CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Management team. Designate a crisis-management team composed of district leaders, club representatives, and experts who will respond quickly in an emergency. Ensure that the team members understand their responsibilities, including how you will communicate and how you'll ensure participants are safe and accounted for. Give the team members access to all necessary data, such as participant and emergency contact information, insurance documentation, and policy documents. Everyone who works with youth programs should know whom to contact in an emergency.

Communication. Establish a procedure for disseminating and gathering information and status updates. Depending on the situation, it may also be necessary to immediately inform youth participants' parents or legal guardians, the district governor, law enforcement, Rotary International, embassies, and insurance companies.



The health, safety, and well-being of youth program participants is the top priority when managing a crisis. It's important to consider in advance what factors would prompt canceling or postponing all planned program activities. Also consider what criteria would need to be met to safely resume operations.

Procedures. Establish procedures for managing foreseeable emergencies. For example, have RYLA camp administrators review fire, medical emergency, and other disaster response plans with their volunteers and program participants; designate disaster shelters; research which medical facilities can best provide emergency services; consider whether translation services will be needed; and research what government resources are available.

Media communication. It is best to designate one person to work with the media. Respond to requests promptly and provide only factual information. View interviews as an opportunity to communicate key points and convey a reassuring message. Make sure to notify RI to get assistance with any media inquiries.

Expenses. Coping with an emergency can lead to costly, immediate expenses. Determine how crisis expenses will be paid; consider establishing a district emergency fund.

4

AWARENESS AND PREVENTION



Creating a Culture of Safety

Everyone has a part in creating safe environments for Rotary's youth program participants. To establish a culture of safety:

Set clear standards and policies. Setting clear policies gives you a strong start in communicating expectations for behavior. Define acceptable behavior. Lay out a range of responses to unacceptable behavior so you'll be ready to recognize it and address it with confidence when it occurs.

Enforce those standards and policies. When you address inappropriate behavior promptly, you send a message that the rules apply to everyone and that violations of any kind will not be tolerated. This accountability reassures program participants and their families that Rotary takes youth safety seriously.

Hold training often. Provide specific, frequent, and relevant training to participants, their families, and volunteers.

Make sure everyone understands their responsibilities. Members, nonmember volunteers, and young people themselves should understand their role and responsibility in ensuring the safety of participants. Even those who aren't directly involved in youth programs should understand that they also have responsibilities to exhibit appropriate behavior, to know the signs of abuse or harassment, and how to report concerning behavior or allegations of abuse or harassment should they become aware.

Pay attention to warning signs. Not only must everyone be prepared to recognize inappropriate behavior, but participants, their families, and volunteers must also feel empowered to act.

Interrupting behavior that causes you concern tells offenders that their actions are being monitored. It also helps people who have good intentions when they are unintentionally acting in a way that could be harmful, and could even prevent them from being accused of sexual abuse or harassment.

Take reports of inappropriate behavior and abuse seriously. How you respond to inappropriate behavior or reports of abuse and harassment has a direct impact on how much harm the behavior causes. Reacting promptly to any concerns or reports of abuse is critical. It may not only prevent further harm to a young person but also reduce damage to the reputations of the club, district, and Rotary.

Appropriate Boundaries Between Adults and Youth

It is important for both adults and young people to understand the boundaries of appropriate behavior and know how to tell others when their own personal boundaries, or those set by your policies, have been crossed. Throughout this section you'll see examples of interactions between adults and young people that are appropriate and others that are inappropriate, regardless of who initiates the behavior. Your club and district should use these lists as examples and develop your own guidelines.

Physical interactions. 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. And remember that consent can be withdrawn at any time. Children 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.

 Acceptable physical interactions (if culturally appropriate and with consent)	 Unacceptable physical interactions (with or without consent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Verbal interactions. Keeping verbal interactions between adults and youth appropriate is just as important as maintaining appropriate physical boundaries.

 Acceptable verbal interactions	 Unacceptable verbal interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Jokes in general • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling someone names • Adults discussing sexual encounters or their personal problems with youth participants • Adults asking youth to keep secrets of any kind • Cursing • Discriminatory or sexual jokes • Shaming or belittling someone • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youths • Making negative remarks about a participant or their family, culture, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or background • Commenting on or complimenting a person's body or body development

One-to-one interactions. When an adult and a 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. Consult with other youth-serving organizations in your area to refine your district's policies on such individual contact in other contexts. For example, you may consider requiring another adult's prior approval of any time spent with just one young person. The other adult would get the details of the meeting and an invitation to observe or to join the meeting without notice. Be especially careful to limit physical contact when you are with just one participant, to prevent the young person or bystanders from misinterpreting your intentions or alleging inappropriate behavior.

 Acceptable individual interactions	 Unacceptable individual interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting in a public place where others are present • A meeting in a classroom, office, or other private or semiprivate location, if you leave the door open and notify another adult in advance • A meeting in a home or other private location, if it's approved in advance (for example, Rotary Youth Exchange host family arrangements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interactions that involve unapproved overnight stays or shared use of showers or toilet facilities • Transporting only one young person in a vehicle without prior approval by another adult

Electronic and online interactions. Communicating with participants by text message, email, social media, or personal phone presents new challenges to keeping participants safe. Many youth-serving organizations prohibit private texting or online conversations between adults and youth. They require the adult to copy another volunteer on any such communications.

 Guidelines for electronic communication with a participant	 What to avoid in electronic communication with a participant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy or include another volunteer or the participant's parent or guardian • Communicate with multiple participants in a closed group, or use a website or social media page that are not visible to the public • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, derogatory, or humiliating comments • Sexual conversations or images • Private messages between a volunteer and a youth without prior approval • Posting pictures of youth participants on social media sites without parental consent • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures

Gift giving. Gifts usually express care and friendship, but because giving gifts can also be used to groom someone for abuse, it is important to establish gift-giving guidelines for your youth programs.

 Acceptable gift giving	 Unacceptable gift giving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving a gift or reward to an entire group of participants • Giving an award or other recognition at an event or in a group setting • Giving a gift to a single participant or a smaller group with the prior approval of their parents or other adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving a gift or reward to a single participant or a small group without prior approval • Giving a gift in secret • Sexually oriented or explicit gifts, including clothing • Cell phones, tablets, or other electronic devices intended to be used for private communication between an adult and a youth • Jewelry, money, or other high-value items • Trips, outings, or meals without prior approval • Alcohol, drugs, pornography, or other illicit or illegal items

Appropriate Boundaries Among Participants

Many of the boundaries that are appropriate between adults and youth also apply among young people. There are, however, some special considerations for both physical and electronic and online interactions just between young people. It is also especially important to watch for signs of abuse or harassment between participants, because they can be easy to overlook.

Physical interactions. Physical interactions between participants should follow clear rules that are based on what is appropriate to your culture and the program. For example, RYLA participants may have physical contact during group activities that build teamwork or trust. Youth program participants, especially those who spend significant amounts of time together, often develop romantic relationships or close friendships. Your policies should make it clear that sexual activity of any kind is not permitted while participating in a program activity or event. Tell program participants that the boundaries are designed not to prevent them from developing meaningful relationships but to protect them from potential harm and prevent people in the program from feeling uncomfortable.

 Acceptable physical interactions (if culturally appropriate and with consent)	 Unacceptable physical interactions (with or without consent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Holding hands as a reasonable display of affection within close friendships or romantic relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hugging with full body contact • Kissing on the lips • Showing physical expressions of affection in isolated location • Sitting on someone's lap • Wrestling • Carrying someone on your back or shoulders • Tickling • Massages • Offering any form of affection that is unwanted • Touching the bottom, waist, chest, or genital areas • Making sexual contact of any kind

Electronic and online interactions. Technology has benefits, but it also creates opportunities for peers to harass or abuse one another. Cyberbullying — using electronic means, including social media, text messages, and emails to tease, humiliate, threaten, or pressure someone — is more and more common. It is especially hard to prevent and detect, because it can happen anytime, anywhere. Educate both volunteers and youth about the dangers of cyberbullying and report any concerns right away.

Recognizing Abuse and Harassment

Instances of abuse and harassment of young people can go unaddressed because adults fail to recognize them or because they're reluctant to view their friends, acquaintances, fellow volunteers, or professionals who work with young people as potential perpetrators.

Youth protection depends on awareness of the possibility of abuse and harassment and vigilance in guarding against it. All Rotary members and nonmember volunteers who work with young people should fully understand what constitutes abuse and harassment and how to recognize the signs.

Severe or pervasive inappropriate behavior. When inappropriate behavior is serious or repeated it can be considered abuse or harassment. It's important to remember that inappropriate behavior may indicate that an adult is gradually testing a young person's boundaries before escalating the behavior to abuse.

Determining when inappropriate behavior becomes abuse is law enforcement's role. If you are not sure whether something should be reported, you can write to youthprotection@rotary.org.

Sexual abuse. Any sexual activity between a legal adult and a minor or youth program participant is considered sexual abuse. This includes pressuring someone to perform sexual acts alone or with another person of any age or gender, through force or coercion or with anyone who is unable to give consent. Sexual abuse can also include both physical and nonphysical offenses. Examples include:

- Sexual assault — making illegal, nonconsensual sexual contact

- Coercion — using fear, humiliation, verbal assault, or threats to pressure someone to participate in, perform, or watch a sexual act
- Sex trafficking or sexual exploitation — using someone for profit, labor, sexual gratification, or some other personal advantage or gain
- Stalking — physically or electronically contacting, following, or watching someone repeatedly when that attention is unwelcome
- Indecent exposure — inappropriately revealing one's body or a portion of one's body
- Voyeurism — watching an unsuspecting or nonconsenting person engage in intimate acts, such as undressing
- Showing the person sexual or pornographic material
- Pervasive or severe unwanted verbal or physical sexual contact

Sexual harassment. This includes sexual advances, requests for sexual acts, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone who is unable to provide consent. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom someone they hope to abuse. Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Sexual names or jokes, references to sexual activity, gossip about one's sex life, or comments about a person's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Inappropriate physical contact, such as intentionally brushing against a person
- Obscene gestures

Peer abuse and harassment. This type of abuse and harassment is just as serious as when adults are involved, but it is often overlooked because it can be difficult to recognize. Or, those who notice it may not know how to address it. Also, young people might hesitate to report it because they fear retaliation from their peers, or they may not be sure themselves if what they experienced was abuse.

Peer abuse can be sexual or nonsexual behavior and takes the same form as abuse or harassment committed by adults.

Nonsexual abuse. Even if abuse is not sexual in nature, it still poses risks to the safety and well-being of a participant. Examples of nonsexual abuse may include:

- Hazing
- Bullying (in-person or electronic)
- Pressure to participate in inappropriate games
- Humiliating or threatening
- Inappropriate behaviors that are severe, pervasive, or objectively offensive

SIGNS OF ABUSE OR HARASSMENT

Rotary members, nonmember volunteers, and parents of Rotary youth program participants should watch for physical and behavioral signs of abuse or harassment. Many of these signs could also be considered typical adolescent behavior or an understandable reaction to family changes, cultural adjustment, or homesickness. Adults who are actively involved in the participant's daily life will be better able to observe the behavioral and physical changes and to determine whether they are signs of abuse.

Physical injuries — a pattern of repeated injury or an injury for which the explanation does not make sense

Anxiety — high levels of worry or nervousness; obsessive-compulsive patterns; fear of certain places, people, or activities; reluctance to be alone with a particular person; nightmares or other sleep problems

Changes in eating habits or body image — swift or extreme weight loss or gain, distorted body image which may sometimes result in eating disorders

Withdrawal — difficulties at school, unwillingness to participate in extracurricular activities, repression, a deterioration in peer relationships, or isolation — all of which may also be signs of depression

Depression — excessive crying, extreme mood swings, diminished self-esteem, self-mutilation, or suicidal thoughts or attempts

Delinquency — criminal behavior, conflict with authority, running away, academic problems, or drug or alcohol abuse

Aggression — overly hostile behavior or language

Age-inappropriate behavior — sexual promiscuity or sexual behavior or knowledge of sex that is abnormal for the child's age

The behavior that young people who are abused commonly exhibit can be associated with youth discipline problems and could even result in their removal from a program, so it is essential to understand why a participant is having behavior problems.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Awareness of abuse and harassment patterns can help you recognize potential problems and current or past transgressions.



Abuse is not always immediately apparent because:

- Physical signs of abuse can heal before they're noticed.
- A young person may not display common behavioral or emotional indicators.
- People may find it difficult to believe that someone they know well may have abused a child, so they may dismiss allegations without investigating them thoroughly — especially when the accused person is a friend or family member or is highly respected.

The vast majority of incidents of abuse or harassment aren't reported because:

- Young people tend to minimize and deny abuse, not exaggerate or over-report incidents.
- Young people might feel that they're to blame for what occurred, fear that they will not be believed, or worry about the potential consequences of a report.
- Young people may be afraid of getting the offender in trouble or of getting in trouble themselves if the abuse occurred while they were breaking a rule or law.
- Males are less likely to report abuse because of self-blame, social stigma, or fears that they will not be believed or will be seen to have a particular sexual orientation.
- Few abusers are prosecuted.

In some cases, young people wait to report abuse until they are adults, or they may never report it.

Recognizing Offenders

Offenders often carefully choose and skillfully manipulate the people they abuse. Before they can commit abuse, they need three things: access, privacy, and control.

Access. Offenders often seek out volunteer work or other positions that allow them to spend time with children. Sometimes they befriend parents or attempt to build a good reputation with parents or youth volunteer leaders by doing favors, giving gifts, or being especially friendly.

Privacy. Offenders look for opportunities to be alone with children, such as taking them to the toilet, offering them rides or private lessons, meeting in places that are out of the sight of others, or volunteering for late or overnight activities with children.

Control. Offenders test children's boundaries, find ways to gain their trust, and often try to become friends with them rather than maintaining the boundaries that are appropriate between adults and youth. They may also manipulate a child into breaking rules so they have a way to threaten or intimidate the child when the child attempts to resist abuse.



The typical offender blends into society and cannot be identified by age, economic status, community standing, race, gender, or mental capacity. An offender is also often a person who is known and trusted by the abused.

Common types of sex offenders may include:

Situational sex offenders. Either adults or youth may ignore or lose sight of appropriate boundaries in certain situations. These offenders may begin a relationship with a child that is appropriate at first but becomes inappropriate or abusive. Such a person may be unhappy, lonely, in a troubled relationship, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and they may use these factors to attempt to justify their lack of good judgment in setting appropriate boundaries.

Preferential sex offenders. These offenders, sometimes referred to as child molesters, often have

a sexual preference for children though may also be attracted to adults. They may also prefer certain physical characteristics or age ranges. Often, they are willing to spend a great deal of time getting to know a child and grooming them before the abuse begins.

Indiscriminate sex offenders. These offenders have no sense of right and wrong and don't care if they hurt others. They may commit abuse in public or abduct a child from toilet facilities or a playground. They do not spend time getting to know a child before the abuse begins.

Recognizing Grooming Behavior

Learning to recognize grooming behavior can help you stop abuse, sometimes even before it starts. In some cases, these behaviors may be innocent, but they can also indicate an intent to sexually abuse a young person.

Child predators groom young people in part to try to see whether the young person will object to or report inappropriate behavior. They also use grooming to gain a young person's trust, find their vulnerabilities, exert authority or control over them, and eventually draw them into a secret sexual relationship.

Grooming may take many forms, including:

Seeking out individual time — arranging to spend time alone with a young person

Isolating someone — separating a young person, physically or emotionally, to gain control and undermine their relationships with friends, family, or others

Offering special treatment — showing favoritism, giving extra attention to one or more young people, or rewarding certain behavior

Keeping secrets — encouraging young people to lie, keep secrets, communicate privately, or hide a relationship

Touching — making physical contact, such as hugging, that may gradually become inappropriate

Desensitizing — treating inappropriate behavior as acceptable, normal, or insignificant

Forcing consent — ignoring or invalidating a young person's right to object to behavior that makes them uncomfortable or violates policies

Giving gifts — offering gifts or rewards, which may seem appropriate at first but can escalate to inappropriate or sexually explicit gifts

Community Grooming

Just as offenders manipulate the people they abuse, they also often manipulate others. This is known as community grooming. They may do anything they can to earn the trust of the community. They are often respected members of the community and successful professionals. They may be your friends or even family members. Abusers who use community grooming techniques are skilled at appearing charming, successful, kind, and helpful. Community grooming can be especially dangerous because people find it hard to believe a person they know and respect could do something harmful.

It is not uncommon for child molesters to be attracted to service organizations like Rotary, because they can use the organization's reputation to improve their own reputation. They may point to their record of community service or charitable contributions as proof of their good character to defend themselves against any allegations.



Skilled child predators may also try to stay on the edges, so they might volunteer to work with youth without taking on a formal role in order to avoid formal screening or background checks.

Offenders use these systematic methods to distract others from inappropriate behavior, gain access to youth, and shield themselves from accountability when they are accused of inappropriate behavior, abuse, or harassment.

5

RESPONDING AND REPORTING



Why Responding Is Important

How you respond to suspicious or inappropriate behavior, policy violations, or allegations of abuse or harassment can have a direct impact on how much harm participants experience. It can also prevent or reduce damage to the reputation of the club, the district, and the entire organization.

If you don't address improper behavior because it seems harmless, it can worsen. Ignoring it can also create an environment where abuse is more likely. For one thing, when sexual offenders see that small violations are accepted, they may think that larger ones are also likely to be ignored. Young people may also think that the behavior is normal or that nobody objects to it. And that makes it less likely that they'll recognize or report abuse if it occurs.

Responding to abuse and harassment appropriately and according to RI policy and local laws protects everyone involved: anyone who may have been abused, anyone who is accused of wrongdoing, and the clubs or districts that run the program.

How to Respond to Inappropriate Behavior by Adults

The behaviors that we've said are inappropriate — including an adult seeking time alone with a young person, expressing affection physically, or giving a young person special attention — may seem innocent. Often, these behaviors are harmless, so if you observe them, you may question whether reporting them is necessary. Here are some guidelines for addressing behavior that seems inappropriate or otherwise causes concern:

1. Stop the behavior right away. If you witnessed the behavior and feel comfortable doing so, tell the adult that what you saw was inappropriate. If you do not feel comfortable addressing the adult, ask a district leader to do so. Interrupting inappropriate behavior is often the most effective way to prevent something more serious from happening.

2. Have a trusted adult ask the participant if they would like to discuss what happened with you or with another trained volunteer.
3. Immediately report the behavior to the appropriate club and district leaders, according to your district's youth protection policy. If the behavior involved a district leader or someone else in a position of authority, contact RI staff members for assistance.
4. Document what you saw or what you were told, as well as any actions taken, but leave the investigation to your club or district leaders or an independent committee appointed for that purpose.
5. Make sure that appropriate action is taken after you've made your report to club or district leaders. If you feel the behavior was not adequately addressed, contact RI staff members for assistance.

Take all reports of inappropriate behavior seriously. Act as soon as possible to prevent it from continuing or worsening. In response to a report of concerning behavior, district leaders should:

- Make sure everyone who needs to know about the behavior does, including the youth protection officer, if the district has one.
- Talk with the young person and their parent or guardian. Either tell the parent what was observed or reported, or let the young person do so — whichever approach they prefer. Tell both of them that the adult violated the district's policy. Assure the young person that you care about them and that their safety is your highest priority. Invite them to ask any questions they have or express any concerns.
- Review district records to see whether the concerning behavior or similar complaints about the same person have been reported in the past. Take behavior patterns into consideration when you decide which safeguards to implement in response to the report. Those safeguards

might include monitoring the volunteer or suspending them from contact with youth. Make a supervision plan to ensure that any safeguards are implemented consistently.

- Inform the person who has been accused about the report. Give the details of the reported behavior and explain why the behavior violates your policies. Tell them what actions will be taken.
- Give the youth participant's parents or legal guardians an update about the situation and explain any actions the district is taking. This may not always seem necessary, but it tells parents again that their child's safety is your highest priority.
- Advise the person who first reported the problem that the report was taken seriously and that it will be investigated and addressed promptly. If appropriate, tell them what actions will be taken.
- Talk with anyone who may need to help implement the actions.
- Stay in contact with those who are implementing the plan, and continue to monitor the situation.



A report of inappropriate behavior may lead to a report of abuse or harassment. If you suspect abuse, follow RI's policies by immediately suspending the volunteer from all youth contact, reporting the incident to local law enforcement, and contacting RI staff within 72 hours.

How to Respond to Inappropriate Behavior by Youth

Peer abuse is usually preceded by subtler inappropriate behavior between young people. Adults often fail to address this behavior either because they don't know how to correct it or they think of it as typical adolescent behavior. However, interrupting concerning behavior between young people early can help protect youth participants from severe harm.

When you suspect, observe, or receive a report of inappropriate behavior between youth, follow these guidelines:

- Whether the interaction was verbal, physical, or electronic, immediately separate the

participants and make sure they have no contact with each other until the situation is resolved.

- Calmly explain to them that these types of interactions are not permitted in the program. Refer them to program guidelines or training materials that describe appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- Document what was observed or reported and how you responded.
- Notify the parents or legal guardians of the participants involved as well as district leaders.
- Depending on the behavior, it may be necessary to contact local legal authorities. In such cases, contact RI staff members for assistance.
- Determine, based on your district's disciplinary policy and the severity of the behavior, whether discipline is required. It may include but is not limited to expulsion from the program. Be sure to inform parents of both participants of your decision.
- If both participants are allowed to remain in the program, determine what additional measures may be necessary to prevent a recurrence. Those may include, for example, increased supervision. Decide whether to write a corrective action plan or follow-up plan for the participants and their parents.
- Document the steps that were taken.

After you address the inappropriate behavior, consider how the club or district might be able to prevent similar situations. For example, whether additional supervision is needed at events, policies or procedures should be revised, or additional training for youth and adults would be helpful.

Responding to a Report of Abuse or Harassment

Any allegation of abuse or harassment must be treated seriously, regardless of the circumstances and regardless of how much time has passed. Handle all allegations according to local laws and RI policy. Consider consulting a legal professional about your

legal obligations and procedures for responding to allegations of abuse or harassment. Volunteers may be legally required to report suspected abuse to local child protective services.



It can be very difficult for someone who has been abused or harassed, especially a young person, to report it. The person who harmed them may be a friend, a family member, or someone they like and respect.

Experiencing abuse or harassment is traumatic, so avoid making participants repeat what happened to them any more than is necessary. Do not ask why questions, which can lead to victim-blaming. Also be aware that responses to a traumatic experience like sexual assault differ. Some people may be able to remember all of the facts of the experience. Some may not be able to for days, months, or even years. There is no “typical” way to respond to trauma.

When abuse or harassment is reported to you, it is critical that you respond in a neutral and responsible manner that is free from blame and judgment.

- Listen attentively. Be supportive of the person making the report, and do not express strong emotions, particularly horror or disbelief. Remember that they may care about the person who harmed them.
- Tell the person that they did the right thing by making a report. If it is the person who experienced abuse, emphasize that it is not their fault they were harmed and that their safety is your highest priority. Tell them that you will likely have to inform others in order to keep them safe, but you will keep the matter as private as possible.
- Ask questions to establish facts. Avoid asking why questions, because you may appear to be judgmental or to be questioning the participant's motives. This can make them feel that they are at fault for what happened or that you think they are. No matter what the circumstances were, nobody should experience abuse, and it is never the fault of the person who was abused.
- Use the same words and phrases they use to describe the situation, themselves, and the person they're accusing while remaining objective and respectful. Anyone who reports abuse or harassment should know that they will be believed and should hear words and phrases that are reassuring.

- Document the allegation during or soon after the participant's report. Try to use the participant's exact words, never add personal opinions or commentary, and include details like the date and time of the conversation.

Districts should always offer an independent, non-Rotary-affiliated legal assistance to participants and their families who report abusive or dangerous situations, so they have an advocate whose only duty is to represent their interests. They should also have access to medical care and mental health care if appropriate. And, if two youth program participants are involved in the alleged incident or behavior, be sure to provide support to both the person who is making the accusation and the person who is accused.

Participants who have experienced abuse or harassment may be hesitant to continue with the program. They should never be required to continue, but they should never be forced to end their participation, either. Talk with the participant, their family, and support professionals to determine how to take care of the student.

Most people are not trained professionals with expertise in determining the gravity or legal implications of an allegation. No Rotary member or nonmember volunteer should ever determine whether an allegation constitutes criminal behavior. That must be left to qualified youth protection agency personnel or law enforcement professionals who are not affiliated with Rotary to ensure an objective review. After securing the safety of the youth who are involved, immediately report all allegations to the police or the appropriate youth protection agency.

If a youth program participant brings an allegation of abuse or harassment to any Rotary member or nonmember volunteer, they must make sure that it is reported properly.

- Take immediate action to ensure the program participant's health and well-being, and get them medical or psychological care, if appropriate.
- Until the matter is resolved, prevent anyone accused of sexual abuse or harassment or other

serious wrongdoing, including other youth, from having any contact with any youth program participants.

- Promptly report every suspicion or allegation of abuse or harassment to the proper law enforcement agency (child protection, social services, and local police) for investigation. In some countries, reporting is required by law. Any legal authority that reviews the matter must not be affiliated with Rotary in any way.
- Follow district policy on notifying specific club or district leaders, such as the district youth protection officer and district governor, when abuse or harassment is alleged. All adult volunteers, program participants, and participants' parents or legal guardians should have their contact information.
- Report all allegations of abuse or harassment and other serious incidents, including hospitalizations, serious crimes, early returns, and deaths, to RI headquarters within 72 hours of learning about them, even if not all incident details are confirmed. Prompt notification helps ensure proper handling of the incident or allegation in accordance with Rotary policy and can facilitate communication between partner districts.

If there is sufficient evidence that an individual, club, or district has knowingly failed to report an incident or allegation as required, the general secretary may determine whether — and the extent to which — involved parties are eligible to participate in Rotary's youth programs, or whether additional sanctions may be necessary, including requiring the club to terminate an individual's membership.

During the independent investigation, protect the safety of youth and the privacy of both the accuser and the accused.

- Cooperate fully with law enforcement and youth protection agencies and do not interfere with their investigation.
- Consult social service agencies to discuss local standards and resources that support program participants who are involved in, report, or experience abuse or harassment. Refer participants to a non-Rotary counselor who can provide them professional emotional

support. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not involved with the program in any way.

- Contact the involved program participants' parents or legal guardians immediately to inform them of the allegation and the actions being taken. Clubs and districts are encouraged to obtain written parental approval for the participants to remain in the program, if they wish to.
- At times, a program participant may be uncomfortable with conduct that may not be legally defined as harassment, and law enforcement may decline to investigate an allegation. Any unwelcome behavior of a sexual, harassing, or violent nature is unacceptable even if it is not determined to be criminal.
- Avoid gossip and blame. Don't tell anyone about the allegation other than those that legal guidelines and RI and district policies require you to inform. Avoid speculation and minimize personal opinions, all of which can interfere with police or legal investigations and violate Rotary's Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth. Comments made about someone who has allegedly abused someone or been abused could also lead to a defamation claim or lawsuit.

After making an allegation, a program participant is likely to feel embarrassed or confused. They may become withdrawn and have mixed feelings about continuing in the program. For example, Youth Exchange participants who make an allegation may want to stay in the program but not continue their relationship with their host club. Although members and other volunteers may have trouble understanding the participant's feelings, it is usually best to honor such wishes if possible.

After the investigation, it may be necessary to strengthen your district's youth protection policy or take other action to prevent recurrences.

- A club must terminate the membership of anyone who admits to, is convicted of, or is otherwise known to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment of youth or youth program

participants. Former members and non-Rotary volunteers who admit to, are convicted of, or are otherwise known to have engaged in any form of sexual abuse or sexual harassment or other act that violates the accepted standard of behavior in the community must be prohibited from working with Rotary youth program participants.

- If a law enforcement investigation is inconclusive, or if law enforcement declines to investigate, the person who was accused may continue as a program volunteer at the district's discretion. However, additional safeguards are necessary to protect both the person named in the allegation and any program participant they may have contact with.
- Additional safeguards for program volunteers can include limiting or suspending their roles, depending on the allegation's circumstances. For example, districts may allow a volunteer to participate in the program only when other volunteers can monitor their behavior and determine whether further prohibitions are appropriate. Each district should consider the local standard of care and review the practices of other youth-serving organizations in its area to determine what safeguards are appropriate.
- Continuing as a volunteer is not a right and is not guaranteed. Additional claims of sexual abuse or harassment against the same person will prohibit them from working with program participants, even if criminal charges are not filed
- The district must review the situation to confirm that youth protection was the highest priority, verify compliance with all district and Rotary policies, and recommend changes to avoid future issues. The district governor and, if applicable, the district review committee, should supervise this review.
- All districts are required to maintain confidential records of any person who has been prohibited from having contact with youth, or anyone whose membership has been terminated as a result of abuse or harassment. Work with district leaders to determine the best way to keep this information in line with local laws to ensure these prohibitions are enforced each year.

People who have been prohibited from contact with youth also may not serve in club or district roles where they might supervise or have contact with youth program participants, such as club Youth Service chair, district Interact chair, district Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) chair, or district Youth Exchange officer. Club or district leaders who have been accused of harassment or abuse must be suspended from these roles until the matter is resolved. They may be reinstated at the district's discretion, depending on the outcome of an investigation by law enforcement.

Barriers to Reporting

The decision to report harassment or abuse is a personal decision, and it can be a difficult one. People who have experienced such violations may not report it for a number of reasons. Those can include:

- Shame, guilt, or embarrassment
- Fear that there will be negative consequences, especially if they broke a rule or law
- Fear that the offender will retaliate against them
- Emotional or financial dependence on the offender
- Not wanting someone they care about to get into trouble
- Lack of resources or support
- Fear that they will be expelled from the program
- Fear that they will not be believed, especially if the perpetrator is in a position of authority or well-respected in Rotary or in the community
- Belief that they consented to the interaction or relationship and thus didn't experience abuse (this is sometimes a result of manipulation by the abuser)



Rotary Youth Exchange students often have additional barriers that prevent them from reporting: They may not be fluent in the local language, they are away from their support system, and they may fear having to go home if the incident occurred while they were breaking a rule. Because students should be encouraged to report abuse or harassment regardless of the circumstances, a district should, at its discretion, use alternative methods to address rule violations that are related to a serious incident. That way, students understand that, although breaking the rules cannot be completely overlooked, their safety and well-being come first.

Because of these and other barriers, it may take a long time before someone reports abuse or harassment — if they ever decide to. But even if a participant does not report abuse right away, that does not mean it did not occur.

You can minimize the barriers to reporting by communicating openly and often with volunteers, program participants, and parents and guardians, showing them that youth protection is your highest priority, encouraging them to report suspected or alleged abuse or harassment even if program rules have been broken, and providing compassionate and thorough support and response when an incident is reported.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE DISTRICT YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

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. The shaded sections reflect Rotary's certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange.

Customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

DISTRICT _____ YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

1. Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth

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

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

Rotary volunteers include:

- Club and district youth program officers and committee members
- Rotary member and nonmember counselors
- Members and nonmembers and their spouses and partners who work with students during activities or outings or who transport students to events
- Youth Exchange host parents and other adult residents of the host home, including host siblings and other family members
- List volunteer roles and descriptions applicable to your district here:

Youth program participant — Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, regardless of age.

3. Legal Entity and Liability Insurance

The district _____ is part of a legal entity known as _____.
This entity has been formed under the laws of the state/province/country of _____

_____ on _____ and is valid at this time.

The _____ carries liability insurance with appropriate coverage and policy limits. This policy protects the organization from third-party claims and lawsuits alleging negligence by the organization, its employees, or its volunteers.

4. Club Compliance

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.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

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 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

5. Volunteer Selection and Screening

RI will not tolerate any form of abuse or harassment.

All Rotary member and nonmember volunteers who are interested in working with youth program participants must meet RI and district eligibility requirements. 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.

Districts will 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.

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.

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.

All Rotary member and nonmember Youth Exchange volunteers who have direct, unsupervised contact with program participants must:

- Complete a volunteer application form
- Undergo a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices)
- Be interviewed, preferably in person
- 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 no more than one Rotary member)
- Comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Exchange program

Youth Exchange host families must also:

- Undergo announced and unannounced home visits both before and during the placement; home visits must be conducted during each year the family participates, 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.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

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

- A counselor must not hold a role of authority over the student's exchange (for example, a member of a student's host family, school principal, club president, or district or club Youth Exchange officer)
- Counselors must be able to respond to any problems or concerns that may arise, including instances of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or harassment

6. Participant Selection and Screening

All students who are interested in the district Youth Exchange program must meet district guidelines and:

- Complete a written application
- Be interviewed by the sending club and/or district
- Attend and participate in all club and district orientation and training sessions

All parents or legal guardians of Youth Exchange participants must also be interviewed at the club or district level to determine the student's suitability to participate in the program.

7. Training

The district and its clubs will provide youth protection training and information on youth programs. The _____ will conduct the training sessions.

The district Youth Exchange program must provide youth protection training and information to all students and volunteers.

The _____ will conduct the training sessions. The district will:

- Adapt Rotary's Youth Protection Guide to reflect district guidelines, information on local customs and culture, and legal requirements
- Develop a schedule that specifies who will be trained, how often, and in what formats
- Conduct specialized training for those involved in Youth Exchange:
 - District governor
 - District Youth Exchange officer and committee members
 - Club Youth Exchange officer and committee members
 - Rotary counselors
 - Other Rotary members and nonmembers who participate in Youth Exchange activities, such as local tours or district events
 - Host families
 - Students (outbound and inbound)
- Maintain records of participation

8. Responding to Allegations

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 B).

The district will cooperate with all law enforcement agencies, child protective services, and legal investigations.

The district should appoint a 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.

The district should develop a crisis management plan as outlined in Rotary's Youth Protection Guide.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

9. Travel by Youth

Youth travel outside of the community must comply with RI and district youth protection policies.

For all youth travel sponsored by the district or its clubs, before departure, the host district must:

- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of all youth program participants
- Give parents or legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information
- Recommended but not required: when traveling more than 150 miles, or 240 kilometers, from the home residence or out of the home country, verify that program participants have adequate insurance, including benefits for medical service, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability in amounts satisfactory to the club or district that is organizing the activity or event, with coverage from the participants' departure until their return
- In addition, for Youth Exchange travel outside of students' host communities or that is not customarily a part of the exchange program, either with their host families or to attend Rotary events, the host district shall receive authorization from the sending district in advance

10. District Youth Exchange Administration

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

- Confirm that all inbound students have at least the minimum insurance that is required by the Rotary Code of Policies (Because the host district must be able to arrange immediate and emergency medical attention when it is needed, it must be satisfied that the student's coverage is adequate)
- Store participant and volunteer records securely at _____ for _____ years after participation, in accordance with all applicable privacy laws
- Provide each student with a list of local services (rape and suicide crisis hotlines; alcohol and drug awareness programs; relevant law enforcement agencies; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer services; etc.). This list must also include the following contacts:
 - For inbound students: host Rotary counselor, host club president, host district Youth Exchange chair, host district governor, and at least two nonmember 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 the Rotary counselor and who can help the students with any problems
 - For outbound students: sending Rotary counselor, sending club president, sending district Youth Exchange chair, sending district governor
- Complete an annual survey reporting on program activity for RI
- Provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number to students
- Report all incidents (including abuse or harassment allegations, accidents, crimes, early returns, and death) that involve Youth Exchange students to RI staff (youthprotection@rotary.org) within 72 hours of learning of the incident
- Prohibit any unauthorized exchange activity, such as sending a student on exchange outside of the Rotary Youth Exchange program or outside of the district certification structure
- Develop contingency hosting plans that list prescreened families. Establish the criteria and procedures for removing a student from the host family. Arrange for temporary contingent housing in advance.
- Ensure that all hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host inbound students as a condition of sending students on an exchange.
- Have long-term program participants stay with multiple host families, if possible. It is recommended that they be placed with three host families during their exchange. If circumstances prevent multiple host family placements, the sending and the host district must agree and must inform the student's parent or legal guardian in advance. At least one backup host family must be available.
- Request a monthly report from each inbound and outbound program participant that includes information on their current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. The district Youth Exchange committee can review the reports and assist program participants as needed.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE ABUSE AND HARASSMENT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

Click in this document to customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

The shaded section Rotary's certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange. Remove it if your district is not certified to participate in Youth Exchange.

Note: Have a local legal professional review these guidelines to confirm that they conform to local laws.

DISTRICT _____ ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth: 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.

No tolerance for any abuse or harassment: Rotary International and its districts are committed to protecting the safety and security of all youth program participants and will not tolerate abuse or harassment. All allegations will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines.

The safety and well-being of program participants must always be top priority.

Definitions

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 about their race, religion, abilities, intellect, tastes, or personal appearance.

Physical abuse — Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

Neglect — Failure to provide the food, shelter, or medical or emotional care that is necessary to well-being.

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 don't include touching, such as voyeurism, indecent exposure, stalking, electronic harassment, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

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. 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:

- Sexual epithets or jokes, written or spoken references to sexual conduct, gossip about someone's sex life, or comments about a person's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Giving private or secret gifts, including those of a sexual nature
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Display of sexually suggestive objects or images
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Inappropriate physical contact, such as intentionally brushing against a person
- Obscene language or gestures, suggestive or insulting comments

Grooming — Establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive.

Consent — An informed, knowing, and voluntary permission for something to happen, including sexual activity.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

Receiving a Report of Abuse or Harassment

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

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

Responding to an Allegation

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.

1. 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.

2. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities.

Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment — first to _____ 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 _____, who will be the liaison to and seek guidance from the appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves this individual, the district governor or _____ should be the main Rotary contact.

The district will cooperate with police and legal investigations.

The district has researched local, state or provincial, and national laws related to youth protection, including reporting allegations, and notes the following legal requirements, of which all volunteers must be aware:

3. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.

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

Follow district-established criteria and procedures for removing a Rotary Youth Exchange student from a host family if the student makes an allegation against a host family member. Move the student to another host family that was screened in advance.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

4. 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:

5. Follow up and implement safeguards.

All Rotary member and nonmember volunteers who know about an allegation must make sure that RI is 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 persons 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. This review is not responsible for determining the validity of any allegations. That can be done only by youth protection agency personnel or trained law enforcement professionals.

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.



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.



APPENDIX C

SAMPLE YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Click in this document to customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

Note: Have a local legal professional review these guidelines to confirm that they conform to local laws.

DISTRICT _____ YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Statement of Conduct for Working With Youth: 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.

The information you provide may be given to an agency that this Rotary district has hired to conduct background checks. In other cases, applicants may be asked to obtain their own background checks for review by district officials.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

How long have you lived at this address? _____

If less than five years, list previous residences:

Primary phone number: _____ Secondary phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Government identification number: _____
(e.g., social security number, social insurance number, or national ID number)

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY): _____

CRIMINAL HISTORY

1. Have you ever been charged with, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to any crime? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Have you ever been subject to any court order (including an order from a civil, family, or criminal court) that involved sexual, physical, or verbal abuse, including but not limited to domestic violence or civil harassment injunctions or protective orders? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes to either question, please explain. Also indicate the dates of the incidents and the country and province or state where they occurred (attach a separate sheet, if needed).



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUALIFICATIONS, AND TRAINING

Position you're applying for: _____

Are you a member of a Rotary or Rotaract club? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, indicate club name and year joined: _____

What about the position interests you? _____

What qualifications, preparation, and training do you have that is relevant to this position?

HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERING WITH YOUTH THROUGH ROTARY

(Attach additional sheets if necessary)

Have you held a Rotary youth program position in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, indicate below:

District: _____ Role: _____ Years: _____

Contact person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Club: _____ Role: _____ Years: _____

Contact person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Events: _____ Role: _____ Years: _____

Contact person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____



This document is an example. CUSTOMIZE THIS POLICY TO FIT YOUR LOCAL AND LEGAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and have a local legal professional review to confirm it conforms to local laws.



HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERING WITH YOUTH THROUGH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

(for the past five years; attach additional sheets if necessary)

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Position: _____ Dates of service: _____

Contact person's name, phone number, email address: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Position: _____ Dates of service: _____

Contact person's name, phone number, email address: _____

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

(for the past five years; attach additional sheets if necessary)

Current or most recent employer: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Position: _____ Dates of employment: _____

Supervisor's name, phone number, email address: _____

Reason for leaving: _____

Previous employer: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Position: _____ Dates of employment: _____

Supervisor's name, phone number, email address: _____

Reason for leaving: _____



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PERSONAL REFERENCES

(may not be relatives; no more than one may be a former or current Rotary member)

1. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Relationship: _____ Years known: _____

2. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Relationship: _____ Years known: _____

3. Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Relationship: _____ Years known: _____

For district use only:

References checked by _____ on _____.

References checked by _____ on _____.

References checked by _____ on _____.



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CONSENT

I certify that all of the statements in this application and any attachments are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have not withheld any information that would affect this application unfavorably. I understand that District _____ will deny a volunteer position to anyone who has been convicted of a crime of violence, sexual abuse, or harassment, or any other crime of a sexual nature and may deny a volunteer position to anyone who has been charged with these crimes.

I give District _____ permission to verify the information in this application, including by reviewing the public records that I have provided, which are duly certified, or by searching law enforcement and other published records (including driving records and criminal background checks) in addition to contacting my former employers and the references I provided. I understand that this information will be used in part to determine my eligibility for a volunteer position. I also understand that as long as I remain a volunteer, this information may be checked again at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review my criminal history.

WAIVER

In consideration of my acceptance and participation in Rotary youth programs, I, to the full extent permitted by law, hereby release, defend, hold harmless, and indemnify participating Rotary clubs, Rotary districts, multidistrict organizations, and their members, officers, directors, committee members, agents, and employees, and Rotary International, its directors, officers, committee members, employees, agents, and representatives ("Indemnitees") from any or all liability for any claim, loss, damages, liabilities, expenses, bodily injury, or death, including any such liability that may arise out of the negligence of any of the Indemnitees or may be suffered or claimed by me as a result of an investigation of, action concerning, or communication of my background in connection with this application.

I further agree to conform to the rules, regulations, and policies of Rotary International, the District _____ youth program, and its affiliates.

I hereby confirm, represent, and warrant that I have never been convicted of or charged with a violent crime, child abuse or neglect, child pornography, child abduction, kidnapping, rape, or other sexual offense, nor have I ever been ordered by a court to receive psychiatric or psychological treatment in connection therewith.

If any provision of this agreement is determined to be illegal or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect. By signing this application, I acknowledge that I have read this application and fully understand its contents.

Signature of applicant: _____

Printed name: _____ Date: _____



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APPENDIX D

SAMPLE YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of interviewing applicants is to determine whether they have the skills they need to fulfill the role's requirements and whether they exhibit the characteristics of a potentially abusive person. It should also give them an understanding of the responsibilities of the role and your expectations. Rotary recommends that at least two people conduct separate in-person interviews to obtain a well-rounded review of the applicant's ability to work productively with youth. Each interviewer should ask the same set of questions, though additional questions will naturally arise in conversation. This way, both sets of answers can be compared for consistency. Conducting interviews in person is important because it allows for more candid responses.

Customize these questions to fit your local programs, customs, and legal circumstances.

VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain why you are interested in volunteering for
Interact _____ and _____.
2. Why do you want to work with young people?
3. Why would you be a good youth programs volunteer?
4. Tell me about your hobbies and any volunteer work you do outside of Rotary.
5. Often we have to follow laws or policies that may seem unnecessary (for example, checking the references of an applicant who is well-known to our club and district). Tell me about a time when you had to follow a rule, even if it didn't seem reasonable. How did you react?
6. Tell me about a time when you thought it was necessary to break a rule.
7. Describe a situation that tested your patience. How did you react?
8. Give me an example of a situation where a young person tested your patience or frustrated you. How did you handle it?
9. This next question may be difficult, but it is important for us to ask. Have you ever abused or molested a child or adult?
10. Do you feel that you have ever positively affected a child's life? In what way, and how do you know?



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11. Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision. What did you do, and why did you make the decision you did?
12. [Additional questions as needed]

When you interview applicants, pay attention to anything that could indicate potential problems. You might want to talk more with the applicant. These are some possible warning signs:

- Any indication that the applicant wants to volunteer to fulfill their own needs, not to positively affect youth
- Interests that were not on their application form
- Excessive interest in working with young people (especially of a certain age or gender)
- Poor judgment in difficult situations
- Signs that they have trouble staying calm in difficult situations
- Signs that they may have trouble maintaining appropriate boundaries while working with youth
- Defensiveness or evasiveness when responding to a direct question about abusive behavior, if culturally appropriate



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APPENDIX E

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS' REFERENCES

Depending on the volunteer role and the requirements of the program, references need to be checked before a volunteer can work with youth. Ask at least three references about the applicant's suitability to work with youth in their role they've applied for. The references should not be family members of the applicant, and no more than one of them should be a current or past Rotary member.

When possible, speak with references over the phone (unless local requirements advise otherwise). Tell them about the role the applicant has applied for, and emphasize the fact that they will be working with young people. Use the same set of questions for all references, and record their responses so you can compare them with the information from the applicant and check for inconsistencies or contradictions.

Customize these questions to fit your local programs and legal circumstances.

YOUTH PROGRAMS REFERENCE QUESTIONS

1. How long have you known the applicant, and how do you know them?
2. Have you observed the applicant working with youth? If so, what kinds of behavior did you observe? If not, give an example of a situation that might indicate how they would work with youth.
3. Can you give an example of the applicant's ability to relate to youth? If not, what qualities does the applicant have that would make them good at working with young people?
4. In what types of challenging situations have you observed the applicant dealing with youth? How did they react? If you haven't observed them in this type of situation, what other challenging situations have you observed them in, and how did they react?
5. Can you give me an example of a time when the applicant used good judgment?
6. Do you know of any reason the applicant should not work with the youth we serve?
7. Do you have any other comments or concerns about the applicant?



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When you speak with references, pay attention to any responses that could indicate potential problems. You might want to talk more with the applicant. These are some possible warning signs:

- The reference has known the applicant only for a short time, for example, less than six months
- The reference has not had contact with the applicant for more than a year
- The reference met the applicant only briefly
- The reference says they knew the applicant under different circumstances than the applicant said
- The applicant preferred in the past to work with youth unsupervised
- The applicant can be physically or emotionally abusive, or is quick to anger
- The applicant does not work well with adults
- The applicant has difficulty taking direction



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APPENDIX F

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES

Advocates for Youth. Publications on the rights of youth and the responsibilities of youth-serving organizations

International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. Abuse prevention resources, including contact **information for partners** in several countries and a searchable listing of worldwide publications

Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Country-specific information and statistics on sexual violence

UNICEF. Information on the protection of the rights of young people, and the **Voices of Youth** initiative, which seeks to help young people learn about the issues that affect their world

World Health Organization. Research on sexual abuse and its prevention worldwide, including **Preventing Violence: A Guide to Implementing the Recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health**

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

AUSTRALIA

Australian Institute of Family Studies. Links to **abuse prevention resources**

UNITED KINGDOM

Keeping Children Safe. Information on child abuse prevention, including training materials targeted to an international audience

UNITED STATES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Abuse prevention resources developed for youth-serving organizations

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Publications about protecting children and bringing perpetrators to justice

National Center for PTSD. Information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for parents and youth program providers on the effects of **childhood sexual abuse**

Nonprofit Risk Management Center. General risk management information for nonprofits, including **resources** for volunteer-based, youth-serving organizations

Pathways to Safety International. Provides services to Americans who travel overseas and empowers those who have experienced interpersonal and gender-based violence abroad

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN). The largest anti-sexual violence organization in the United States, providing a 24-hour national sexual assault phone hotline and private online chat

WINGS Foundation. Local and national **resources for adult survivors** of childhood sexual abuse and their families

If you have questions or comments about this guide,
send them to:

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Programs for Young Leaders
One Rotary Center
1560 Sherman Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201-3698 USA
Email: youthprotection@rotary.org
Phone: 1-866-976-8279

