

# 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 sections in **blue** follow Rotary's certification requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange; remove these if your district is not certified to participate in Youth Exchange.

Customize this policy to fit your local and legal circumstances.

## DISTRICT 6400 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

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

District 6400 strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

### 2. Definitions

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

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

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

### 3. Incorporation and Liability Insurance

The \_\_\_\_\_ district/district youth program(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is part of a separate 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.

District 6400 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 supervision and control of all youth activities in the district, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange. District 6400 will monitor all participating clubs and ensure that they comply with youth protection and Rotary Youth Exchange certification requirements.

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 6400 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
- List of services in the area (rape and suicide hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, relevant law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.)
- Any club youth-protection training materials

## **5. Volunteer Selection and Screening**

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

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

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

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

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

- Undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability, demonstrating:
  - Commitment to the safety and security of students
  - Appropriate motives for hosting a student that are consistent with Rotary ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange
  - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student
  - Ability to provide appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well-being
- Complete a written application
- Undergo home visits with and without notice, both before and during the placement; home visits must be conducted annually, even for repeat host families

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

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

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

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

All students interested in the District 6400 Youth Exchange program must meet district guidelines and:

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

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 for program participation.

## **7. Training**

District 6400 and member clubs may provide youth-protection training and information on youth programs. The District Youth Exchange Committee will conduct training sessions for students and adults affiliated with the program.

The District 6400 Youth Exchange program must provide youth-protection training and information to all students and volunteers. The District Youth Exchange Committee will conduct the training sessions. Specifically, District 6400 will:

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

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

District 6400 takes all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will handle them in accordance with the Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines.

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

District 6400 may appoint a youth protection officer or district review committee to evaluate and review files, policies, and allegations regularly.

## 9. Travel by Youth

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

For all youth travel sponsored by District 6400 or its clubs, the following will be done before departure:

- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians of program participants
- Give parents and legal guardians details about the travel, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information
- When traveling more than 150 miles, or 240 kilometers, from the residence, verify that program participants have adequate insurance, including benefits for medical services, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability

For the travel of Youth Exchange students outside their host communities, either with their host families or to attend Rotary events, District 6400 shall obtain written permission from the students' parents or legal guardians, which is generally a part of the student's application process.

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

- Receive authorization from District 6400 in advance
- Obtain written permission from the parents or legal guardians for travel outside of the local host community
- Provide parents or legal guardians details about the trip, including locations, accommodations, itineraries, and the organizer's contact information

## 10. District 6400 Youth Exchange Administration

The District 6400 Youth Exchange program, in collaboration with participating clubs, must also:

- Confirm that all inbound students have insurance that meets or exceeds what is prescribed in the Rotary Code of Policies. District 6400 requires:
  - *Must meet the minimum insurance requirements for the Central States Rotary Youth Exchange Program.*
- Store participant and volunteer records securely at Central States Rotary Youth Exchange YEAH Software Program for seven years after participation, in accordance with all applicable privacy laws.
- All student records that are paper based must be shredded for safety and security reasons.
- Provide each student a list of local services (rape and suicide crisis hotlines, alcohol and drug awareness programs, relevant law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.). This list must include the following district and club contacts:
  - For inbound students: Rotarian counselor, host club president, host district Youth Exchange chair, and host district governor
  - For outbound students: Rotarian counselor, sponsor club president, sponsor district Youth Exchange chair, sponsor district governor
- Provide each student with the names and contact information of at least two non-Rotarian resource people — one male and one female, who are not related to each other and do not have close ties to the host families or Rotarian counselor — who can help the students with any problems.
- Submit inbound program participants' data to RI via Central States Rotary Youth Exchange before or shortly after the exchange begins.
- Provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number to students.
- Report all serious incidents (abuse or harassment allegations, accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to RI Youth Exchange staff within 72 hours.

- Prohibit placement of students outside of the district Youth Exchange program structure (“backdoor” exchanges).
- Establish criteria and procedures for a student’s removal from the host family and arrange for contingent, temporary housing in advance.
- Develop contingency hosting plans that include prescreened families.
- Ensure that all hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host inbound students.
- Attempt to ensure that long-term program participants have multiple host families. It is recommended that long-term program participants be placed with three host families during their exchange.
- Conduct follow-up evaluations of both students and host families through Central States Rotary Youth Exchange.
- Request a monthly report from each inbound and outbound program participant that includes information on current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. The district Youth Exchange chair can then review the reports and assist program participants as needed. Student reports should be downloaded into the YEAH software Program through Central States Rotary Youth Exchange.

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

Rotary International strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians’ spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

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