

DISTRICT 6510

Rotary Youth Exchange

Sexual Abuse & Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines

I. Introduction

The most powerful force in the promotion of international understanding and peace is exposure to different cultures. Youth Exchange provides thousands of young people with the opportunity to meet people from other lands and to experience their cultures.

A Youth Exchange student will spend a year, or perhaps just an extended period of time, living with a host family in a country other than their own. Rotarians, their families, and non-Rotarian volunteers are expected to use their best efforts to safeguard the welfare of and prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse or harassment of every student with whom they come into contact.

Rotary International is committed to protecting the safety and well being of Youth Exchange students and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines. **The safety and well-being of students should always be the first priority.**

II. Definitions

A. Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse refers to engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a student, or forcing or encouraging a student to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts alone or with another person of any age, of the same sex or the opposite sex.

Additional examples of sexual abuse could include, but are not limited to:

- Non-touching offenses
- Indecent exposure
- Exposing a child to sexual or pornographic material

B. Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment refers to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is a technique used by sexual predators to desensitize or “groom” their victims.

Examples of sexual harassment could include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual advances
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life, and comments about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature

- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures or drawings
- Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures and suggestive or insulting comments

III. Determining Abuse or Harassment

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

IV. Allegation Reporting Guidelines

For use by all adults to whom a student reports an incident of abuse or harassment.

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

A. Report from Student

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

B. Protect the Student

- Ensure the safety and well-being of the student.
- Remove the student from the situation immediately and all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser.

- Give reassurance that this is for the student's own safety and is not a punishment.

C. Report to Appropriate Law Enforcement Authorities

- **Immediately** report all cases of sexual abuse to the appropriate law enforcement authority.

In District 6510, the appropriate law enforcement authority is the local law *enforcement agency*, which in turn will report the allegation in accordance with the regulations of Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS).

- Then report to the Club leadership and District 6510 leadership for investigation, including District Governor and the Youth Exchange District Chair.
- In most situations, the first Rotary contact will be the Rotarian counselor who will have the responsibility for seeking the advice of and interacting with appropriate agencies.
- If the allegation involves the conduct of the Rotarian counselor, the district Youth Exchange chair should be contacted and will perform all duties as described in the *Sexual Abuse & Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines*.
- All allegations will be reported to RI within 72 hours. The person responsible for reporting to RI will be the District Governor.
- All allegations will be reported to CSRYE Chairman and/or Vice Chairman within 72 hours by District Governor.
- All Clubs and District 6510 Volunteers will cooperate with police or legal investigations.
- District 6510 has researched local, state, and national law related to sexual abuse and harassment prevention and notes the following legal requirements of which all adult volunteers participating in the program must be aware.
 - All adult volunteers will be required to complete district sponsored sexual abuse and harassment prevention training, in accordance with RI and specific state of Illinois requirements.
 - Any adult volunteer who becomes aware of a sexual abuse or harassment allegation is required to follow District 6510 *Sexual Abuse & Harassment Reporting Guideline* immediately.

D. Ensure Privacy & Avoid Gossip and Blame

- Those informed of the allegations will NOT tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines.
- Care must be taken to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.
- District 6510 will ensure the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person., by following these procedures:
 - Victim and accuser will always be referred to as John Doe or some other generic name to ensure privacy.
 - **Only** those individuals identified within these guidelines will be provided information regarding the allegation.
 - Any written documents generated as a result of an allegation will be maintained according to District 6510 retention policy and in accordance with Illinois law.

- District 6510 will identify **One** individual who will be authorized to communicate to the public in the event public comments are required.

E. Do Not Challenge the Alleged Offender

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

F. Follow-Up

- After reporting allegations to the Rotarian counselor or district Youth Exchange chair, follow-up to ensure appropriate steps are being taken to address the situation, will be adhered to.
- Specifically, District 6510 will conduct an independent and thorough investigation into any claims of sexual abuse or harassment, but will in no way interfere with an ongoing legal investigation.
- Any adult against whom an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment is made will be removed from all contact with youth until the matter is resolved.

V. Post Report Procedures

For Use by Rotarian Counselors, and District Youth Exchange Chairs

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

The adult to whom the student reports the abuse should follow the *Allegation Reporting Guidelines*.

- Confirm that the student has been removed from the situation immediately and all contact with alleged abuser or harasser.
- Contact appropriate law enforcement agency immediately (if not already done). If law enforcement agencies will not investigate; the club or district Youth Exchange chair should coordinate an independent investigation into the allegations.
- Ensure the student receives immediate support services.
- Offer the student an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent the interests of the student. District 6510 will identify a trained professional to fulfill this responsibility.
- Contact the student's parents or legal guardian. If away from home, provide the student with the option of either staying in country or returning home.

- Remove alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with the specific student and other youth while investigations are conducted.
- Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
- The student's Rotarian Counselor should inform the district Youth Exchange chair and District Governor of the allegation.
- The District Governor must inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours.
- The District Governor will coordinate the completion of follow-up reports of steps taken, the outcome of all investigations, and the resulting actions.

VI. Post Allegation Report Guidelines

A. Responding to the Needs of the Student

- There will need to be a cohesive and managed team approach to supporting the student after an allegation report.
- The student is likely to feel embarrassed, confused, and may become withdrawn and appear to be avoiding members of the host family or club.
- After a report of harassment or abuse, students may or may not want to remain on their exchange.
- If they do, they may or may not want to continue their relationship with their hosting Rotary club depending on the circumstances.
- In some cases, a student may wish to remain in country, but change to a different host club.
- It may be difficult for club members and host families to understand how the student is feeling, but it would be helpful for the student to know that the club remains a support for them.
- Club members and host families may experience ambiguity toward their roles and may feel unclear regarding their boundaries.
- However, they need to do whatever is necessary to reassure the student of their support at all times.

B. Appropriate Response for Addressing Issues within the Rotary Club for Allegations Made Against Rotarians or Non-Rotarians

- When addressing an allegation of abuse or harassment, the most important concern is the safety of the students.
- Club members should not speculate, make editorial comments, or offer personal opinions that could potentially hinder any police or criminal investigations.
- Club members should be cautioned about speculating or commenting on the matter during the investigations.
- Comments made about alleged victims in support of alleged abusers do not support our statement of conduct or Rotary ideals.

- Comments made against an alleged abuser could lead to a slander or libel claim filed against Rotarians or clubs by the alleged abuser.

Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth

Rotary International is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. It is the duty of all Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses, partners, and other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and young people with whom they come into contact.

Adopted by the RI Board of Directors, November 2002