

Rotary District 9455 Youth Protection Policy Summary

Rotary District 9455 strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability 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.

This Youth Protection Policy Summary applies to those Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Rotary Youth Programs. The summary is in accordance with rules and procedures set out in the Rotary International Youth Protection Guide and the expectations of our insurers. It also complies with legislative requirements common to all Australian States and Territories.

These requirements apply to all adult persons working with young people entrusted to their care and must be adhered to.

Glossary

Child A young person in a Rotary youth program under the age of 18 years.

RI Rotary International

RYE Rotary Youth Exchange

RYP Rotary Youth Program

Volunteer An adult involved in Rotary Youth Programs who has direct interaction either supervised or unsupervised with young people in a Rotary Youth Program

Responsible Adult

A responsible adult is any adult who, in a family or group situation for a short period of time, is responsible for caring for a youth/students.

Youth Program Participant

Any individual who is participating in a Rotary Youth Program regardless of whether he or she is of legal age of majority, also referred to in this document as young people, children, child, youth, student or young person.

DIO District Insurance Officer

DYPO District Youth Protection Officer

WWC The terminology used for a criminal history check in West Australia

General Requirements

All Rotarians will bear in mind paedophiles often appear as respectable, conscientious, hardworking people.

- For insurance purposes, it is a requirement that all Clubs complete and return **the Club Insurance & Compliance Declaration** to their DIO by **30th April** each year.
- All Rotary clubs will have a **Youth Protection Officer** whose duties involve managing the club's youth protection compliance procedures including insuring the completion of all required protection documentation.
- The suitability of **all volunteers** assisting in RYPs will be carefully assessed in accordance with their roles as set out in the following two points.
- **Volunteers** who could be alone with a young person for a period of time, being such time that might allow grooming or abuse to occur, are required to:
 - complete a **Rotary Youth Volunteer Information and Declaration Form**
 - attend a comprehensive interview
 - provide three referees
 - have a **Working With Children Check (WWC)** Only after an authorised Rotarian has examined or carefully carried out all of the above and found the candidate to be a suitable person will they be allowed to work alone with a young person.
- All other volunteers assisting in a RYP may be defined as a **"Responsible Adult"**

A responsible adult is any adult who, in a **family or group situation** for a short period of time, is responsible for caring for a youth/students.

The adult shall be in a position to offer the youth/student assistance, guidance or an educational, cultural or recreational experience.

This adult will not have been police checked or formally reference checked because the experience or contact is such that there is virtually no opportunity for misconduct to occur.

The person responsible for the youth/student needs to be satisfied, **in the same way a conscientious parent would be satisfied**, that this adult is **suitable** for their own underage son or daughter to stay or associate with for a short period of time.

- Wherever possible, it is desirable to have two or more **Responsible Adults** together with a young person at any one time.
- All states require that any Rotarian responsible for storing documents which contain people's personal information such as medical records, even though they may not have direct contact alone with young people, be assessed in the same way as a **Volunteer** who is alone with a child.

- It is an RI requirement that the Chairs of all Youth Committees, even though they may not have direct contact alone with young people, are assessed in the same way as a **Volunteer** who is alone with a child.
- Where Rotary is assisting in a youth program which is under the control of another organisation such as a school, the protection requirements set out in this document still apply together with any additional requirement the other organisation may require.
- Should a Rotary youth committee officially promote, select, and sponsor students for a program which is run by another organisation, e.g. the National Youth Science Forum, it is their responsibility to ensure the organisation has appropriate screening and safety procedures in place.
- It is mandatory that during the Rotary year the various people involved in RYPs who are required to complete and submit compliance forms as set down in the respective program's manual(s) do so.
- Declaration forms must be securely stored in accordance with district policy and made available only to people who are required to see them.
- Copies of **all declaration forms** must be sent to the District for document retention purposes
- This policy and all youth program manuals are to be reviewed annually or more frequently if needed. These updates will be done by the District Review Committee in consultation with the appropriate youth committees. Documents are to be labelled with the date of last revision and their review number.
- Should a Rotarian know or have a strong suspicion that a child has been abused, harassed, mistreated or neglected it is their legal obligation to notify all appropriate authorities.

Requirements Relating to Young People

- Young people on applying to participate in any RYP will be briefed on the requirements, scope and rules relating to that program. They will also be assessed to ensure they are suitable candidates.
- Should they have a problem big or small we must do our utmost to give young people entrusted to Rotary's care whilst participating in a Rotary Youth Program, the confidence to seek our help knowing we will:
 - listen sympathetically
 - respond promptly, effectively and with compassion.
- Young people in RYPs will be briefed on and given a list of responsible people and organisations in and outside Rotary they can approach if they have an abuse or harassment issue.
- We will stress, should they have a problem, they are free to approach whichever person on the list they feel most comfortable talking to.
- A condition of joining or remaining in a RYP is that all participants agree to, and follow the rules and instructions relating to that program.
- At the conclusion of a Youth Program, participants will be given the opportunity to offer comments about the program by way of a debrief. All comments will be seriously considered.

Requirements Relating to Allegations of Abuse

Young people who have been abused might be mentally traumatised and find it very difficult to talk of their experience. If they are to make a full disclosure, it is critical for those they may approach to treat them with care and compassion.

DISTRICT 9455 ABUSE AND HARASSMENT ALLEGATION REPORTING GUIDELINES

District 9455 is committed to protecting the safety and well-being 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 or verbal abuse — The use of fear, humiliation, or verbal assaults to control the behavior of another. Examples include rejecting the person, preventing him or her from developing normal social relationships, and making derogatory statements about his or her race, religion, ability, 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 care that is necessary to well-being.

Sexual abuse — Engaging in or arranging implicit or explicit sexual acts, whether they are performed alone or 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 is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also include nontouching offenses, such as voyeuristic behavior, indecent exposure, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material.

Sexual harassment — Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or directed at someone unwilling or unable to provide consent. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is used by sexual predators to desensitize or groom their victims. Examples of sexual harassment include:

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

RECEIVING AN ALLEGATION REPORT

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 encouraging, 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 ensure that it doesn't happen to others.

Get the facts, but don't interrogate. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that he or she did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking "why" questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives. Remember that your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities.

Be nonjudgmental and reassure. Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It's especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that it was not his or her fault and that it was brave and mature to come to you.

Document the allegation. Record the conversation, including the date and time, as soon after the report as you can. Try to record the young person's exact words.

ALLEGATION RESPONSE

The following steps must be taken immediately after alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer, while others should be performed by a district officer, as specified.

1. Protect the young person.

Ensure the safety and well-being of the young person by removing him or her from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for his or her safety and is not a punishment.

Take immediate action to ensure the young person's health and well-being, and get him or her medical or psychological care, if necessary.

2. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities.

Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment — first to [designate appropriate law enforcement authority] for investigation and then to club and district leaders for follow-through. Interrogations related to allegations of abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement agencies.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is Club Youth Protection Officer, who is responsible for seeking advice from and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of this Rotarian, the district governor or District Youth Protection Officer should be the first Rotary contact.

District 9455 will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

District 9455 has researched local, state, and national laws related to youth protection, including reporting allegations.

3. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.

District 9455 will remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved.

[Follow established criteria and procedures for removing a Rotary Youth Exchange student from a host family if they report a problem with, or make an allegation against, a host family member. If appropriate, move the student to the temporary housing that was screened in advance.](#)

4. Avoid gossip and blame.

Don't tell anyone about the allegation other than those who need to know. Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.

District 9455 maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person.

5. Follow through.

A district officer must inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours and provide ongoing status reports.

District 9455 will ensure that the program participant's parents or legal guardians have been notified and offer the young person an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent his or her interests.

If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, or if the investigation is inconclusive, the district governor will appoint a district review committee to coordinate an independent review to ensure that district youth protection policies were followed, confirm that youth safety was the highest priority, and determine any necessary modifications to district procedures. This review is not responsible for determining the validity of any allegations; that can only be done by youth protection agency personnel or trained law enforcement professionals.

If law enforcement has found the allegations to be noncriminal, the district governor is responsible for contacting the alleged offender. The district governor may delegate this task to a district youth protection officer or district review committee.

District 9455 will document all accusations of inappropriate behavior and the actions taken to resolve the situation, so that patterns of inappropriate behavior are identified and addressed.

Requirements Specific to Youth Exchange (YEP)

Youth Exchange Students are to be admired. At an early age they have shown the maturity to leave their family and friends to travel and study in another country where they know nobody.

Assimilation to a new culture and in most instances a new language requires our help and understanding.

- RYE is a District program administered for clubs by the District Youth Exchange Committee.
- The District Youth Exchange Committee is required to ensure all parties involved with incoming and outgoing exchanges, attend and receive comprehensive training of inbound and outbound students, inbound and outbound club counsellors, and all natural and host families.
- All Rotary Clubs wishing to be involved in either sponsoring or hosting an exchange student need to apply to the District Youth Exchange Committee for certification to do so by submitting the required forms declaring they will abide by the requirements.
- All RYE students must be given an inbound and outbound counsellor of the same sex to assist and guide them. This is a critical role requiring the appointment of an experienced person.
- The club counsellor must not be a host family member.
- All young people in RYE will be given and briefed on a list of simple, common-sense actions they can take to keep themselves safe.
- It is important the counsellors and the student are in regular communication before and during their time overseas or time hosted in Australia.
- Specific rules have been designed for the YE Program and it is very important these rules are followed by all involved.
- RYE students are obliged to provide regular reports for both their host and sponsoring countries. It is important counsellors ensure this is done.

- All host families will be carefully interviewed in the family home by two members of the Rotary club to ensure their suitability and that of their home before their appointment is confirmed.
- The club youth exchange counsellor will make occasional unannounced or at-short-notice-visits to inbound exchange student's homes to check on their wellbeing.
- The District Youth Exchange Committee is required by RI to have a dedicated mobile phone available 24 hours a day for emergency student contact.
- The District Youth Exchange Committee is to ensure all RYE students have travel insurance in accordance with RCOP 46.060.10 before they leave their country of origin.

For More information refer to the following resources:

- Rotary International – Rotary Youth Protection Guide
- RI Online training “Protecting Youth Program Participants”
- Rotary National Insurance Committee
- Aon Risk Solutions
- District Youth Protection Policy and Manuals