

**District 5150 Youth Exchange**  
**Youth Protection Policy**  
Revised May 2016

**1. Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth**

District 5150 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 any other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of anyone with whom they come in contact.

**2. Definitions**

Volunteer: Any adult involved with Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), or other Rotary activities having sustained direct interactions with students, either supervised or unsupervised. This includes, but is not limited to, club and District Youth Exchange officers and committee members, Rotarian counselors, Rotarians and non-Rotarians, their spouses and partners that host students for extended activities or outings, host parents, and other adult residents of the host home (including siblings and other family members).

Student: Youth involved with Rotary Youth Exchange or Rotary Youth Leadership Awards regardless of whether they are of the age of majority.

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.

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.

**3. Incorporation of District Youth Programs and Liability Insurance**

The Rotary District 5150 Youth Exchange program and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards are separately incorporated as Rotary District 5150 Youth Programs, Incorporated and Rotary District 5150 RYLA, Incorporated, respectively, under the laws of the state of California, USA. Each corporation shall carry general liability insurance with coverage and limits of not less than \$1,000,000 US for each incident.

**4. Volunteer Selection and Screening**

The following screening steps must be completed prior to participation in Youth Exchange activities or other Rotary youth programs:

1. The Rotary Club and the Office of the District Governor will maintain for at least ten years, all records of Youth Volunteer Affidavits, criminal background checks, waivers, and screening for adults working with minors.
2. Each volunteer interested in participating in any Rotary youth program, to include Rotary Youth Exchange, RYLA, Interact, and the like, must:

- Complete a Youth Volunteer Affidavit form and authorize the Rotary Club and/ or District 5150 to conduct a criminal background check.
- Undergo personal interviews.
- Provide a list of references for the Club to check.
- Meet RI and District eligibility requirements for working with students.
- Understand and comply with RI and District guidelines for the Youth Exchange and other Rotary youth programs.

RI requires that any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment be prohibited from working with youth in a Rotary context. If an individual is accused of sexual abuse or harassment, and the investigation into the claim is inconclusive, then, for the safety of youth participants and the protection of the accused, additional safeguards must be put in place to assure the protection of any youth with whom the individual may have future contact. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated to participate in youth programs. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position.

3. Host families must meet the following selection and screening requirements, in addition to those listed above.
  - Complete a written application.
  - Host families must undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability for hosting exchange students. The interview, to be conducted by the Rotary Club Youth Exchange Committee, must assess the potential Host Family's:
    - Demonstrated commitment to the safety and security of students;
    - Motivation for hosting a student is consistent with Rotary ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange;
    - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student;
    - Aptitude for providing appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well being.
4. The responsible Rotary Club shall conduct home visits. Home visits must be conducted for each family and may include both announced and un-announced visits. A Home Visit shall be conducted prior to placement, and again during placement, even for repeat host families.
5. All adult residents of the host home must meet the selection and screening guidelines. This includes adult children of the host family and other members of the extended family that reside in the home either on a full- or part-time basis.
6. Rotarian counselors must meet the criteria for all Volunteers, as well as the following:
  - Counselors shall not be a member of the student's host family.
  - Counselors must be trained in responding to any problems or concerns which may arise during the exchange, which may include instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment.
  - Counselors should not be close friends or relatives of other volunteers involved with a particular student (i.e. school principal, host family, etc.).

## **5. Student Selection and Screening for Youth Exchange**

All students interested in participating in the District 5150 Youth Exchange program must:

- Complete a written application and be interviewed for their suitability for participation in the Youth Exchange Program. The interview(s) is mandatory.
- Attend and participate in all District orientation and training sessions.

All parents or legal guardians of students interested in participating in the District 5150 Youth Exchange program must also be interviewed to determine their student's suitability for participation in the Youth Exchange Program. The interview is mandatory, even for repeat families.

## **6. Training**

District 5150 will provide abuse and harassment prevention training to all Youth Exchange Program participants. The Youth Exchange Committee will conduct and document the training sessions.

District 5150 will:

- Adapt the Abuse and Harassment Prevention Training Manual to include relevant information on specific District guidelines, local customs, cultural issues, and legal requirements.
- Develop a calendar for training and define the frequency of training required for each volunteer position, including descriptions of who is to participate, when training should occur, and how training will be conducted.
- Conduct specialized training sessions for the following Youth Exchange Program participants:
  - District Governor
  - District Youth Exchange committee members
  - Club Youth Exchange 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)
  - Parents and legal guardians of students
- Establish guidelines to ensure that all those required to be trained have participated.
- Maintain records of participation to ensure compliance.

## **7. Allegation Reporting Guidelines**

District 5150 is committed to protecting the safety and well-being young people participating in any Rotary club or District program and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment.

All allegations of sexual abuse or harassment, police incidents, injury, life threatening illness, runaway and death will be taken seriously and must be handled in accordance with the Youth Exchange Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines that are mandated by the United States Department of State, through Western States Student Exchange (WESSEX), a Rotary organization that oversees Youth Exchange Programs.

The Department of State requires WESSEX to appoint a Responsible Officer who contacts the Department of State within 72 hours regarding all serious incidents involving an inbound student. This is required by the Code of Federal Regulations.

Rotary Clubs are required to contact the Responsible Officer within 24 hours of learning of a serious incident regarding an inbound student. Clubs must also notify the District Governor, Club President and Youth Exchange Chair.

Mike Cloutier is the WESSEX Responsible Officer for District 5150. His phone is 510-912-7523 and his e-mail is [edpeetnik@gmail.com](mailto:edpeetnik@gmail.com)

Jim Simkalo is the District Youth Protection officer. His phone is 415-235-7223, [simkalo@yahoo.com](mailto:simkalo@yahoo.com)

Dave Bertini is the District Youth Abuse Prevention Coordinator. His phone is 650-302-9959

[dcbertini@menlopark.org](mailto:dcbertini@menlopark.org)

Mark Flegel is the District Youth Exchange Program Chairman His phone is 65-444-2289

[markflegel@aol.com](mailto:markflegel@aol.com)

GUIDELINE: If you notify the natural parents you must notify the Responsible Officer.

### **8. Investigation Guidelines**

District 5150 is not an investigative organization. Our responsibility is to report all serious incidents to the Responsible Officer. He/She will give District 5150 guidance and directions as to the proper handling of the incident.

Rotary clubs within District 5150 and the District will cooperate with all law enforcement, child protective services, and legal investigations.

### **9. Other District 5150 Responsibilities**

District 5150:

- Rotary Clubs will contact the Responsible Officer within 24 hours of all serious incidents involving an inbound student. DO NOT decide if it is “serious”. Let the Responsible Officer decide.
- Requires that all inbound Youth Exchange students maintain a policy of insurance consistent with Youth Exchange guidelines.
- Provides each student with a list of local services in the District (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, proper law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.)
- Will follow RI guidelines for Youth Exchange Web sites and usage of the Rotary Marks.
- Evaluate and review this policy and accompanying procedures on a regular basis.

### **10. Club Compliance**

District 5150 will monitor and ensure that all participating Rotary clubs within the District comply with RI guidelines for abuse and harassment prevention. All clubs that wish to apply to the District for certification must provide the District with a copy of the following for review and approval:

- Copies of all materials produced in the club to promote and support the Youth Exchange, promotional materials and brochures, Web site links, etc.
- List of services in area (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, proper law enforcement agencies, community services, private services)
- Club abuse and harassment prevention training program.

Participating clubs must agree to:

- Complete and return a signed compliance statement that the club is operating their program in accordance with District 5150 and RI policy.
- Conduct criminal background checks and reference checks for all volunteers involved with the program, including, but not limited to adult full-time residents of host home, counselor, club chair, and all Rotarians and their spouses or partners with sustained direct unsupervised contact. All volunteers must complete and sign the Youth Volunteer Affidavit.
- Provide legible copies of all background checks, reference checks, interview assessments, and Home Visit documentation to the Office of the District Governor within 7 days of receipt by the Club and upload the material into the Youth Exchange portal “YEAH” as directed by the District Youth Exchange Chair for review by WESSEX and the Responsible Officer.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive system for host family selection and screening that includes home visits and interviews both prior to and during the placement.
  - Provide documentation to the Office of the District Governor within 7 days of selection / non-selection decision and/ or home visit(s) and upload into the YEAH portal.
- Conduct follow-up evaluations of both students and host families.
  - Provide documentation to the Office of the District Governor within 7 days of departure and upload into the YEAH portal.
- Follow the Youth Exchange Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines found in Appendix A. Report all allegations of sexual abuse or harassment to the Responsible Officer and appropriate authorities immediately (including police or state agencies as appropriate) and then to the club and District leadership for investigation.
- Prohibit direct placement of students outside of the District 5150 Youth Exchange program structure (e.g. “backdoor exchanges”).
- Set procedures for removal of a student from the host family (criteria for moving a student and back-up temporary housing available in advance).
- Develop contingency plans for hosting that include pre-screened and available back-up families.
- Provide each student with a comprehensive local services list.
- Ensure that the host counselor for each student is not a member of the student’s host family.
- Ensure that the host counselor is trained in responding to any problems or concerns that may arise during the exchange, including the prevention of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or harassment.
- Support attendance at District training on sexual abuse and harassment prevention for host families, outbound students, inbound students, and their parents or legal guardians.
- Follow RI guidelines for Youth Exchange web sites and usage of the Rotary Youth Exchange symbol.
- Report all serious incidents (accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to the Responsible Officer, Program Chair and District Governor immediately.
- Conduct interviews of all applicants and applicants’ parents or legal guardians.

**District 5150 Youth Exchange**  
**Serious Incident Reporting Guidelines**  
(Appendix A)  
Revised May, 2016

**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 and Rotary International District 5150 are committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of Youth Exchange students and will not tolerate their abuse, neglect or harassment. All allegations of a serious incident will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines. The safety and well-being of students must always be the first priority.

The Department of State includes Rotary Youth Exchange in the United States Visitor Exchange Program, and it will get involved if the incident or controversy could be expected to bring the Department of State, the visitor's Exchange Program or Rotary Youth Exchange into notoriety or disrepute. The State Department has issued specific guidance for reporting incidents to the State Department.

Rotary Clubs, through the Responsible Officer of District 5150 must immediately report to the Department of State any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation of any other allegations of abuse or neglect of an exchange student. Rotary Clubs must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation.

Failure to report such incidents to the Department of State and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the suspension and revocation of the sponsor's Exchange Program.

**Definitions**

Nature of the Incident or Allegation

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.

Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Any deliberate touching of sexual areas (breasts, genital area, buttocks) including oral sex.
- Non-touching offenses, such as indecent exposure, or exposing a minor or student to sexual or pornographic material.

**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 may 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 drawn
- Sexual leering or whistling
- Any inappropriate physical contact such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments.

Allegations must be reported if they include any of the following:

Incident Involving the Criminal Justice System (police, child protection services, etc.)

Exchange Visitor Death or Exchange Visitor Missing

Threat of Negative Press, Foreign Government or Embassy Involvement

Public Events or Natural Disasters Directly Involving Student Safety

Rotary Violations (self-recognition of errors in vetting, oversight, staffing, etc.)

Patterns of Behavior Problems (substance abuse, aggressive physical contact, severe bullying, etc.)

Host Parent Substance Abuse

Mental Health Issues (eating disorder, cutting, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, planned program termination due to mental health concerns, etc.)

Dangerous and Unsuitable Living Conditions (non-vetted people in the home, theft, inappropriate relationships, pest information, mold, filth, etc.)

Life Threatening Health Conditions (traumatic brain injury, severe burn, debilitating heart condition, major surgery, seizure disorder, etc.)

**Is it Abuse or is it Harassment?**

Whether the alleged conduct amounts to sexual abuse or sexual harassment is not a critical distinction to be made by any adult to whom allegations are made. After ensuring the safety of the student, all allegations should be immediately reported to the Responsible Officer within 24 hours of the incident. The Responsible Officer reports directly to the United States Department of State that oversees all student exchange programs. The incident must also be reported to the Rotary District 5150 Youth Exchange Chair, with notification to the District Governor. Law enforcement officials may be contacted at any time by any adult involved in receiving reports of sexual harassment or abuse, and no member of the Rotary

Club or the District 5150 program should discourage reporting cases of abuse to law enforcement officials.

## **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 shall follow these **Allegation Reporting Guidelines:**

### **1. Report from Student**

- a. **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.
- b. **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.
- c. **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.
- d. **Be non-judgmental and reassure the student.** Do not be critical of anything that has happen 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.
- e. **Record.** Produce 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.

### **2. Protect the Student**

Ensure the safety and well-being of the student. Immediately remove the student from the situation and from all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Give reassurance that this is for the student's own safety and is not a punishment.

### **3. Report the Incident**

Immediately report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment to the Responsible Officer for District 5150. The report must be made within 24 hours of first notification of the incident. The Responsible Officer will provide guidance to the club, the Youth Exchange Chair, and the District Governor. If, in the opinion of any of the adults involved in receiving the report of harassment or abuse, the incident should be reported to law enforcement, it is appropriate to make such a report to the local police where the reported incident occurred. The local club and District 5150 will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

The appropriate contacts for reporting an incident include the Responsible Officer, Student Counselor for the exchange student, the Club YEO, the Club President, the Inbound Chairperson for the District committee, the Chair of the District Youth Exchange Committee and the District Governor.

In addition to reporting the incident to the Responsible Officer within 24 hours, the District Governor shall report all allegations to Rotary International within 72 hours.



#### 4. **Avoid Gossip and Blame**

Do not tell anyone about the report other than those required by the guidelines. Care must be taken to protect the rights of both the student and the accused during the investigation.

District 5150 maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person by enforcing the following procedures:

- Youth Exchange Counselors, YEO's, Club presidents, and members of the Youth Exchange Committee shall be trained to discuss these incidents only with appropriate adults under conditions which promote privacy (avoid discussions in public places).
- Written notes or reports or other documentation about abuse or harassment incidents shall be maintained in closed files in private areas only, and only by those directly involved.
- Club YEOs shall forward all incident documentation to the District Youth Exchange Chair for filing in long-term storage.
- Rotary Clubs may maintain a duplicate file (under control of the YEO or Club President).

#### 5. **Do Not Challenge the Alleged Offender**

The adult to whom the student reports must not contact the alleged offender. In cases of abuse, the interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. In cases of non-criminal harassment, the district Youth Exchange Chair and District Youth Abuse Prevention Coordinator are responsible for investigating, and may be in contact with the alleged offender after the student has been moved to a safe environment.

#### 6. **Follow-Up**

Upon receiving a report or allegation of sexual abuse or harassment, the District Youth Exchange Chair will ensure that steps are taken to address the situation. Specifically, the District 5150 Compliance Chair will conduct an independent and thorough investigation into any claims of sexual abuse or harassment. (District 5150 may defer investigation to local law enforcement when they are involved and are conducting their own investigations. It is important not to interfere in investigations that are taken by police or other authorized outside investigators). 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.

### **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.

1. The adult to whom the student reports the abuse should follow the Allegation Reporting Guidelines. The Responsible Officer must be notified within 24 hours of the incident.
2. Confirm that the student has been removed from the situation immediately and all contact with alleged abuser or harasser. Contact between the abuser or harasser and the student should be avoided during any investigative period.
3. Determine whether to contact appropriate law enforcement agency immediately (if not already done). If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, document the decision. The club and District Youth Exchange chair should coordinate an independent investigation into the allegations.
4. Ensure that the student receives immediate support.

5. Determine when (and how) to contact the student's parents or legal guardian. If far away from home, provide the student with the option of either staying in the country or returning home. No student should be sent home without prior approval of the Responsible Officer as US State Department may have concerns.

#### **Additional Steps Which May Be Taken As Appropriate:**

6. Offer the student an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent the interests of the student.
7. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the Youth Exchange Program, to assist in an investigation.
8. Determine whether to remove the alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with the specific student and other youth in the future.
9. Cooperate with any police or legal investigation.

### **Post Allegation Reports Guidelines**

#### *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 the 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 towards 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.

#### **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**

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