ROTARY DISTRICT 5970

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Version Updated December 6, 2019

I. Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth

District 5970 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.

II. Definitions

Volunteer. Any adult involved with Rotary youth activity who interacts directly and under any circumstances that provides the opportunity for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of a youth participant. A “volunteer” under this definition would include, but not be limited to, an adult providing unsupervised transportation of a youth participant, an adult chaperone, adult host family members, RYLA counselors, Interact adult sponsors, and any other adult who may have one-on-one contact with a Youth Participant. The term “volunteer” would not include Rotarians who have incidental contact with youth, or contact in a group setting, or contact where supervision is provided, or in such other circumstances where the opportunity for the abusive conduct does not exist.

Youth Participant. Anyone who participates in a Rotary youth program, whether child or adult.

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 non-touching offenses such as voyeuristic behavior, indecent exposure, or showing a young person sexual or pornographic material. Sexual abuse includes any conduct that constitutes sexual abuse under Chapter 709 of the Iowa Criminal Code.

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 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.

Emotional 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. Emotional abuse includes any conduct that constitutes mental injury in violation of §232.68 of the Iowa Code.

Physical abuse. Physical contact intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm. Physical abuse includes physical abuse in violation of §232.68 of the Iowa Code.

Club Youth Protection Officer (CYPO). Rotary club member appointed by the Club President who bears primary responsibility for enforcement of the District Youth Protection Policy for all club activities and all Interact Clubs sponsored by that member’s Club.

District Youth Protection Officer (DYPO). Rotarian appointed by the District Governor having responsibility to oversee member Rotary club enforcement of the District Youth Protection Policy and to oversee enforcement of the District Youth Protection Policy in all District programs, including RYLA and the Rotary Youth Exchange Program.

District Program Youth Protection Officers. Rotarians appointed by the Chairperson of the Youth Exchange Committee and the Chairpersons of the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) and the Young Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (YRYLA) Boards to oversee enforcement of the District Youth Protection Policy in their respective programs.

Suitable Background Checks. A search of sex abuse registries, child abuse registries, criminal records, and civil records as reasonably necessary to determine whether an individual who is proposed as a Volunteer has any convictions for crimes of assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, lascivious acts, public exposure, or acts of a similar nature, or, is subject to any active civil restraining orders. If such search discloses any such convictions or active civil orders then such background check is deemed to be “positive” and disqualifies the applicant from serving as a Volunteer. If the background check shows no convictions or active civil restraining orders, then it is deemed a “negative” report and the candidate is qualified to act as a youth Volunteer. (If there are pending criminal charges against a candidate or a history of criminal arrest pertaining to a candidate, then the executive officer of the sponsoring club or program, or the District Governor, will have the discretion to disqualify the candidate as a Volunteer.)

III. District Youth Protection Officer.

A. Qualifications. The District Youth Protection Officer (DYPO) shall be a Rotarian with a background in law, law enforcement, social services, or education. This Rotarian must receive a negative suitable background check report prior to assuming his or her responsibilities as DYPO and must receive a similar background check each anniversary during his or her term of service. These background reports shall be filed with the District Executive Secretary. The DYPO must also complete the training described below within 30 days after his or her appointment to the position by the District Governor.

B. Term. The appointment to this position should be made by the District Governor for a term of three years commencing on July 1.

C. Training. The DYPO shall become fully acquainted with the Rotary Youth Protection Guide and shall complete the online course “Protecting Youth Program Participants” as offered at the learning center of Rotary.org, and shall further complete the online course “Youth Protection Training” as offered by the North American Youth Exchange Network at NAYEN.org.

D. Duties. The District Youth Protection Officer shall promote compliance with this Policy by all clubs in the District and by all District youth programs. The DYPO shall also respond to all allegations of abuse that are referred by clubs or District programs and shall ensure that proper protocol is followed in responding to such allegations of abuse.

IV. Club Youth Protection Officer.

A. Qualification and Appointment. Each Rotary Club in District 5970 shall have a Club Youth Protection Officer (CYPO) appointed for a term of three years by the Club President. This person may be an existing officer of the Club, including the Club President, but should preferably have a background in law, law enforcement, social services, or education. This officer shall become qualified by filing an application in the manner of a Volunteer Applicant through the District 5970 website portal pertaining to Youth Protection.

B. Duties. The Club Youth Protection Officer shall ensure that all persons acting as “volunteers” have been properly screened and trained in accordance with the requirements of this Policy. The CYPO should also ensure that proper protocol is followed in responding to each report or allegation of abuse as set forth in this Policy and the Rotary Youth Protection Guide. (See link to District 5970 Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines.)

V. RYLA Youth Protection.

A. Appointment of Youth Protection Officer. The chairperson of RYLA and YRYLA shall appoint a Youth Protection Officer for each program. This can be an existing officer of the program, including the chairperson, or a person who does not otherwise have active responsibilities in the program. The appointee shall become qualified by filing an application in the manner of a Volunteer Applicant through the District 5970 website portal pertaining to Youth Protection.

B. Duties. The Youth Protection Officer shall enforce compliance of this Youth Protection Policy in the program which they serve. This will include proper selection, screening, and training of Volunteers; education of youth participants; and ensuring appropriate response to reports or allegations of abuse, assault, or other wrongful conduct involving youth participants. (See link to District 5970 Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines.)

VI. Youth Exchange. The chairperson of the District 5970 Youth Exchange Committee shall submit a report to the District Governor each year on or before September 1 certifying that the District Youth Exchange Program is in compliance with the by-laws and rules of Rotary International concerning youth protection, and in compliance with all laws, rules, regulations, and procedures of the US State Department. The chairperson of the Youth Exchange Committee shall also assume responsibility for compliance by the Youth Exchange Program with the terms and provisions of this Policy.

VII. Protocol for Selecting and Training Volunteers.

A. Youth Exchange. The Volunteers utilized in the Youth Exchange programs shall be selected, screened, and trained in the manner required by the US State Department and the rules, regulations, and procedures recommended by NAYEN. All allegations or reports of abuse shall be handled pursuant to the protocol set forth in the District 5970 Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines (see link).

B. RYLA and YRYLA.

1. Suitable background checks. The Youth Protection Officer for each of these programs shall ensure that each and every Volunteer establishes qualification by filing an application through the District 5970 website portal relating to Youth Protection, and receives confirmation of eligibility from the District Administrator. Volunteers who have current certification as volunteers under the Rotary Youth Exchange Program are not required to obtain independent certification under this Policy, upon providing documentation of their RYE certification to the District Administrator.

2. Interview. The Youth Protection Officer or his or her designees shall interview each prospective Volunteer to determine his or her suitability as a youth volunteer. The length and depth of such interviews may vary based on the applicant’s experience, duties, and other considerations.

Volunteers who have current certification as volunteers under the Rotary Youth Exchange Program are not required to obtain independent certification under this Policy, upon providing documentation of their RYE certification to the District Administrator.

 C. Rotary Clubs.

1. Suitable Background Checks. The Rotary Club Youth Protection Officer shall ensure that each person seeking to act as a youth Volunteer establishes qualification by filing an application through the District 5970 website portal relating to Youth Protection and receives confirmation of eligibility from the District Administrator.

2. Interview. The Club Youth Protection Officer shall interview each prospective Volunteer to determine his or her suitability as a youth Volunteer. The length and depth of such interview may vary based on the applicant’s experience, duties, and other considerations.

VIII. Recertification of Volunteers.

A. Effective Period of Background Reports for All Volunteers. A background check and negative background report is only effective for a period of one year and therefore to remain qualified to act as a Volunteer or a Youth Protection Officer an individual must obtain a new suitable negative background check report annually.

B. Training. The training that each Volunteer or Youth Protection Officer receives to qualify as a Volunteer or Youth Protection Officer remains effective for a period of three years, after which such person must undergo retraining to remain eligible as a Volunteer or Youth Protection Officer.

IX. Protocol for Allegation Response. The protocol for receiving and responding to an allegation of abuse of a youth participant is set forth in Exhibit A to this Policy. STRICT COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PROTOCOL IS REQUIRED IN RESPONDING TO ALL COMPLAINTS ALLEGING PHYSICAL ABUSE, SEXUAL ABUSE, AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

X. Education of Youth Participants. Each club and each Rotary District youth program when engaging with youth shall make an effort to inform the youth participants of the person or persons who may be contacted in the event that the youth participants experience sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or harassment. Youth participants shall also be informed of the protocol that will be followed in such event. For programs where the involvement between volunteers and youth is extensive, such as RYLA, Interact, or Rotary Youth Exchange, a more complete program of instruction shall be offered that explains the behaviors that are regarded as unacceptable, the rights of the youth participants, the protections from such behaviors, and the protocols for addressing complaints.

XI. Travel by Youth. For all youth travel sponsored by District 5970 or its clubs the following must be done before departure of the youth participant: written permission obtained from the parents or legal guardians of the program participant; parents and legal guardians advised of the 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, verification that program participants have adequate insurance including benefits for medical services, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability. Additional requirements pertain to travel of youth exchange students as set forth hereinafter.

XII. Compliance. It shall be a requirement to receive the District Governor’s Club Excellence Award in any Rotary Year that the Rotary Club making application for this award certify to the District Governor that it has an active Club Youth Protection Officer and otherwise is in compliance with the provisions of this Policy.