



# **YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Adopted: March, 2017**

Skilled leadership is critical to creating an environment that focuses on child safety. While youth protection is the responsibility of all adults involved in youth programs, compliance with Rotary International (RI) and district policies depends especially on the vigilance of the district governor, various district program chairs, the district youth protection officer, district youth service chairs, club presidents, club youth service chair and club youth program chairs. They should coordinate their efforts to raise awareness of youth safety issues and develop and implement youth protection procedures.

## District Governor

The district governor is responsible for the supervision and control of district programs, including all youth programs and activities. District chairs and other volunteers are overseen by their governors and report to them. Given the sensitive nature of youth programs, governors are encouraged to use the

### EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING

**District governors should plan for continuity when making committee appointments. Because of the special knowledge and experience that administering youth programs requires, it is highly recommended that districts use a leadership succession plan to draw from the expertise of experienced committee members and develop leaders within the committee. The plan should also arrange for an overlap period, so that incoming youth program chairs learn important procedures and policies from their predecessors.**

period between their nomination and the time they take office to learn as much as possible about the programs their district participates in.

A district governor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the district has a youth protection policy that complies with the Rotary Code of Policies for all youth programs including Rotary Youth Exchange; all policies should be reviewed by a local legal professional to ensure compliance with local laws
- Working with district committees to ensure policy compliance throughout the district and appropriate handling of all abuse or harassment allegations and other crises
- Working with the Assistant Governors, Club Presidents will be educated as to the importance of ensuring their clubs follow the District Youth Protection Policies in their entirety.
- If necessary, intervening directly to administer youth programs, even if responsibilities have been delegated to other district and club officers
- Establishing a committee or process to closely review legal charges and convictions that, while not directly related to a youth protection violation, might otherwise disqualify a volunteer from working with youth

## District Program Chairs

Each year, the district governor should appoint or reappoint a chair for each youth program the district participates in. A program chair monitors and directs program activity at the club and district levels and serves as a resource and point of contact for clubs. One person can serve as chair for multiple years; however, having an effective succession plan is key to ensuring consistent program

management.

Specifically, a district youth program chair should:

- Know all RI and district youth protection policies and program operations and ensure that district and club programs meet all policy requirements
- Assist with club training, participant screening and selection, program logistics, and risk management
- Develop an effective support system for youth, encouraging them to report and cope effectively with challenges
- Communicate with national and international contacts about program challenges and successes and serve as a liaison between clubs
- Coordinate with the district youth protection officer (or governor) to respond immediately and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, or crisis
- Keep the district governor informed of youth program activities

Districts are encouraged to establish committee advisory roles that give program chairs a way to continue to lend their experience and knowledge to youth activities. Such roles may or may not be officially recognized by the district.

### District Youth Protection Officer

It is strongly recommended that district governors appoint a youth protection officer to foster safe operations across all youth programs. This officer should be a resource on abuse, harassment, and other risks and crises. He or she should have professional experience in counseling, social work, law, law enforcement, or child development. The youth protection officer should:

- Monitor changes in national and local laws related to youth protection, as well as any changes in RI policies, and relate them to the governor and district program chairs
- Work with the district and clubs to inform all Rotarians of their youth protection obligations
- Confirm that appropriate screening measures are conducted for all youth programs, in compliance with Rotary policies and local laws
- Direct the selection of Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers and ensure that volunteer screening is documented appropriately
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to Rotarians, other volunteers, and youth program participants and their parents
- Oversee proper handling of allegations and protect the interests of all who are involved

- Maintain records of all allegations of abuse, harassment, or other crises

Sometimes the unthinkable happens: a serious earthquake, a train collision, an act of terrorism, civil unrest, or a shooting or stabbing in a school. A youth protection officer should consider what the district would do in one of these emergencies and how it could best ensure that program participants were safe and that all necessary parties, including participants' parents or legal guardians, were notified.

## Club Presidents, Club Program Chairs, and Other Club Officers

Rotary club presidents have overall responsibility for operating and coordinating club youth activities, with the support of club committee members. A club's president and committees should:

- Know all Rotary and district youth protection policies and program operations that apply to a club's involvement, and ensure that club programs meet policy requirements
- Implement required training, screening, program logistics, and risk management procedures

### ROTARY INTERNATIONAL STAFF

**Staff at the Rotary International (RI) Secretariat support districts that work with Interact, RYLA, and Rotary Youth Exchange and assist districts and clubs in youth protection matters.**

**The Secretariat's role includes ensuring compliance with Rotary policies, assisting districts in communicating with their partners abroad, and facilitating reports to local law enforcement.**

**Contact staff directly with any questions about RI policies, or for assistance with media relations, at [youthprotection@rotary.org](mailto:youthprotection@rotary.org) or +1-866-976-8279.**

- Engage regularly with youth program participants to get feedback on the programs

- Coordinate with the district youth program chair and district youth protection officer to respond immediately and thoroughly to all allegations of abuse, harassment, and other crises

## Other Club Roles

The activities of Rotary clubs to foster safe environments for youth extend beyond the club president. Roles within each club vary based on program needs and a club's committee structure, but they can include club Youth Exchange officers, Rotarian counselors, Interact club advisers, and RYLA volunteers.

Strong support and effective management of youth programs throughout the club are essential to ensuring that all youth protection policies, including district procedures, RI policies, and local laws and regulations, are followed. All club-level volunteers and program officers must understand Rotary and district policies and work with their club presidents to communicate all youth protection concerns to district leaders and/ or local law enforcement promptly. Those who have admitted to or been convicted of a crime related to sexual abuse or harassment are ineligible for Rotary membership—even if these crimes were committed long ago or against other adults.