

ROTARY DISTRICT 7680

Youth Protection Policy and Implementation

Background

Rotary Clubs place great emphasis on their work with people in the community, including young people through Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Interact, Rotaract, Group Study Exchange, and other programs for youth such as mentoring and scholarships. These volunteer efforts are vital to the quality of life in our communities and to the good reputation of Rotary and Rotarians. For these good works to continue, it is extremely important that our Rotary Clubs protect the interests of everyone involved and create and maintain the safest and most respectful environment for all participants in Rotary activities.

Policy

Each Rotarian, their spouse or partner, and all other volunteers are responsible to safeguard, to the best of their ability, the welfare of every person with whom they come into contact during activities sponsored by Rotary. Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another Rotarian, Rotarian's spouse or partner, volunteers, or program participants will not be tolerated. This responsibility shall include the prevention of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and all forms of harassment or neglect to those who may be vulnerable. Special attention shall be given to the protection of young people. Fulfilling this duty not only ensures their protection, but also safeguards the interests of Rotary Clubs and Rotarians by minimizing their risk of liability, including legal liability, should any participant in a Rotary activity become a victim of abuse.

This policy applies to all Rotarians and volunteers involved in serving youth. More specifically, this policy applies to Rotarians and other volunteers who stay overnight with youth, bring students into their homes, make one-on-one contacts with youth, provide extended transportation or other support services to youth, and participate in other activities in which an adult could abuse or harass a youth.

Rotarians who engage in or knowingly allow or tolerate sexual abuse or harassment are in violation of this policy and are subject to be dismissed from Rotary International and possible legal proceedings.

Implementation

Rotary District 7680 is a member of the Ohio-Erie multi-district, incorporated under the laws of Ohio. District 7680 conducts its youth exchange program and has certified its compliance with the new rules issued by Rotary International and the US Department of State, within the structure and procedures of the OE multi-district. All Rotary Clubs in District 7680 that wish to participate in the youth exchange program must operate within the policies and guidelines of District 7680 and the Ohio-Erie multi-district as well as maintain good standing with Rotary International. Meeting these certification requirements allows clubs to host inbound students and sponsor outbound students.

A summary of the rules guiding Youth Exchange is provided on the other side of this document.

Rules Highlights

- Clubs take applications from volunteers, conduct interviews, background checks (including criminal) and reference checks, and require signed statements from volunteers for their compliance with program policy and procedures.
- Clubs secure more than one voluntary host family for each inbound youth for the full year program, select hosts after visiting their homes and securing affirmative references and background checks.
- Rotarian counselor of same gender is assigned for both inbound and outbound exchange students. This Rotarian is not part of a host family for inbound students, and is trained in responding to allegations of abuse and harassment.
- Clubs follow reporting guidelines for sexual abuse and other serious incidents provided by Rotary International and District 7680.
- Clubs ensure that inbound exchange students are given information to aid them in dealing with abuse and harassment situations, including several contact persons, a hot line number for immediate assistance, and appropriate services available in the area.
- Clubs provide local briefings and encourage host families to attend district training.
- Clubs and district conduct interviews and orientation of all outbound students and their parents/legal guardians, secure signed compliance statements regarding youth exchange rules, and evaluate outbound exchange experiences.
- Clubs follow district's procedures for removing students from host families including securing pre-approved back-up families and for removing adults from participation in the program.
- Clubs conduct post-exchange evaluations with inbound students, host families, and counselors.
- District and clubs prohibit placement of students outside the District 7680 and Ohio Erie structure (backdoor exchanges).
- Clubs provide copies of written material they use to promote and operate youth exchange activities to the district.
- District provides regular training and consultation for clubs and youth in youth exchange policies and procedures.
- District provides guidelines and support for criminal background checking, managing response to abuse allegations, maintaining records, and other procedural details.