**Protection Policy and Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines**

## **Introduction**

District 6780 is committed to quality youth programs and to provide protection for all youth involved in programs of District 6780 at the district and/or Rotary Club level. Our youth programs are designed to help develop future community leaders and good citizens. Their safety is paramount. Harassment or abuse will not be tolerated. A safe environment is required at all times while dealing with our youth.

The most powerful force in the promotion of international understanding and peace is exposure to different cultures is our Youth Exchange programs. 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 an extended period of time, up to a year, 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 in contact.

Rotary International is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of Youth Exchange, Interact, Speech Contestants, and other youth involved in Club activities will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled within the following guidelines. **The safety and well-being of students should always be the first priority.**

### Definitions

**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.

Additional examples of sexual abuse could include, but are not limited to:

Indecent exposure

Exposing a student to sexual or pornographic material

Inappropriate touching

**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 could 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 drawings

Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures and suggestive or insulting comments

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

Whether the alleged conduct amounts to sexual abuse or sexual harassment is not to be determined by the Rotarian to whom allegations are made.

After ensuring the safety of the student, all allegations should be immediately reported to appropriate law enforcement authorities. In the United States and Canada, reporting of sexual abuse is required by law.

### Allegation Reporting Guidelines

1. **Report from Student**

If you are sexually or physically assaulted, abused, or are accused of sexually or physically assaulting or abusing another person, you should follow this procedure immediately:

1. Report the situation to your local Rotary Club, Youth Service Protection Officer, Youth Exchange contact, Interact Sponsor and School Officials.
2. If you feel that you cannot tell your local Youth Exchange or Interact Sponsor contact, then report the situation to the District Youth Exchange Chairperson and/or District Youth Protection Officer. If you cannot report the situation to either of these people, report the situation to District Governor or Youth Service Officer whom you are comfortable making a report to.

If there is not an immediate response when you make your report, report it again, and continue to do so until someone responds in an affirmative manner to take care of the situation. Make sure that we understand that your situation is serious.

1. **Report from Parents (Natural or in case of Youth Exchange, host)**

If your son/daughter notifies you that s/he has been sexually or physically assaulted, abused, or are accused of sexually or physically assaulting or abusing another person, or, if after talking with your son/daughter you feel that either of these situations has occurred, you should follow this procedure immediately:

1. As soon as possible, report the situation to your local Rotary Host Club Youth Exchange or Youth Protection Officer contact.
2. If you are unable to make this contact, or feel uncomfortable doing so, contact the District Governor.
3. If there is not an immediate response when you make your report, report it again, and continue to do so until someone responds in an affirmative manner to take care of the situation. Make sure that we understand that the situation is serious.
4. **Reporting Guidelines for Adults**

**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 is responsible for following these ***Allegation Reporting Guidelines***

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 happened or of 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.** Keep 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.

1. **Protect the Student**

**Ensure the safety and well-being of the student.** Remove the student from the situation immediately 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.

1. **Report to Appropriate Authorities**

**Immediately** report all cases of alleged sexual abuse to the appropriate law enforcement authorities first and then to the club and district leadership for investigation. The local police department should be the first contact.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the Rotarian sponsor who has responsibility for seeking the advice of and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of the Rotarian sponsor, the District Youth Protection Officer should be contacted.

All allegations involving Youth Exchange Students must be reported to the Ohio-Erie General Chair, RI and the Department of State (DOS reporting applies to US Rotary Clubs only), within 72 hours of the initial report. The person responsible for doing so is the District Youth Exchange Chair. Districts will cooperate with all police or legal investigations.

In cases of harassment, a report must be made to the Rotary Club district youth exchange leadership, within 72 hours. The Youth Protection Officer, District Youth Exchange Chair and/or District Governor are responsible for having an investigation conducted.

You will likely be requested to provide the following information:

1. The student’s name and location
2. The suspected perpetrator’s name and relationship to the child (if known)
3. A description of what you have seen or heard regarding the abuse or neglect
4. The names of other people having knowledge of the abuse
5. Your name and phone number

Should the district investigation of harassment indicate the incident is sexual abuse or criminal in nature, it will be immediately reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency and Rotary International within 72 hours of the initial report.

1. **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 victim and the accused during the investigation.

Districts are to maintain the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person by refusing to share any details of the alleged offense with any persons outside law enforcement or state agencies, except the following Youth Protection Officer, Rotary Youth Exchange personnel: Club Counselor, District Youth Exchange Chairman,

1. **Do Not Challenge the Alleged Offender**

The adult to whom the student reports the allegation **must not contact** the alleged offender. In cases of abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. *In cases of non-criminal harassment, the District Youth Exchange Chair and District Governor are responsible for having an investigation conducted, and they will be in contact with the alleged offender after the student has been moved to a safe environment.*

1. **Follow-Up**

After reporting allegations to the Rotary Protection Officer or District Youth Exchange Chair, follow up to ensure steps are being taken to address the situation. Specifically, Districts will conduct an independent and thorough investigation into any claims of sexual abuse or harassment. 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. Privacy of both the student and the alleged adult abuser will be respected during the investigation.

**Post Report Procedures**

**For Use by Rotarian, Interact Sponsor, District Youth Exchange Officials**

The student’s Rotarian sponsor and the district Youth Protection officer 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.*
2. Confirm that the student has been removed from the situation immediately and all contact with alleged abuser or harasser.
3. Contact appropriate law enforcement agency immediately (if not already done). If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, the club or district should coordinate an independent investigation into the allegations.
4. Ensure the student receives immediate support services.
5. Offer the student an independent, non-Rotarian counselor to represent the interests of the student. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the Rotary Youth Programs.
6. Contact the student’s parents or legal guardian. If away from home, provide the student with the option of either staying in country or returning home.
7. While investigations are being conducted, remove the specific student and any other youth from all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser.
8. Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
9. The student’s Rotarian Sponsor should inform the district Youth Protection Officer and district governor of the allegation. Either the district governor or the district Youth Protection Officer chair must inform Ohio-Erie District Chairman and Rotary International of the allegation as soon as reasonably possible, and provide follow-up reports of steps taken, the outcome of all investigations, and resulting actions.

**Post Allegation Report 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.

**Post Allegation Report 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.

**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**

**Rotary International** 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.

**District 6780 Youth Protection Officer**

Jerry L. Wear, PDG

3428 Rena Street

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee 37863

865-228 1670

[jerrywear@att.net](mailto:jerrywear@att.net)

District Governor, 6780

Greg Maciolek

10737 Carpenter Run Lane

Knoxville, TN 37922

W: 865-675-5901

C: 865-548-3700