

Response to Critical Incidents Policy & Procedures Youth Exchange Students

The safety and wellbeing of the exchange student is paramount at all times.

Although rare, emergency situations do occasionally arise during Youth Exchange activities. Preparation for any possibility is an essential part of a Youth Exchange program.

These guidelines outline how to prepare in advance, the individuals to contact, and the steps to follow during an emergency.

Each Rotary club hosting a Youth Exchange student should have a designated person responsible for administering this policy if needed.

Procedural tips

- The Club Mentor should keep a copy of the student's passport and travel documents in a safe place readily available at all times
- The District RYE Placement Officer should retain copies of these documents in the event of an emergency
- The Club Mentor and/or current Host Family should know at all times details of the student's whereabouts and proposed travel plans. They should ascertain that such plans have been approved by the natural parents/legal guardians of the exchange student in accordance with the travel policy and that all relevant travel application forms have been completed, with relevant travel permissions sought
- The student's parents should provide written authorisation naming the Host District Chair or other Responsible Officer to act on behalf of the parent/s in the event of serious injury or death. This document may be required by relevant authorities. (Refer to the consent by student and parents/legal guardians on the student application form)
- All Outbound students must be registered with DFAT before they commence their exchange year

Emergency/Disaster or Serious Incident Order of Contact

In the case of emergency/disaster or serious incident, the following people should be contacted in this order whenever possible:

- Student should contact Host Family
- Host family should contact Club Mentor
- Club Mentor or President will contact the District RYE Chair
- District RYE Chair will contact District RYE Placement Officer, District Youth Protection Officer, Host District Governor and Sponsor Club or District RYE Chair
- Host District Governor will contact Sponsor District Governor
- **IMPORTANT** – The sponsoring district representative will contact the student's family due to possible language or interpretative limitations.
- Host District Governor will inform Rotary International(RI) within 72 hours, and complete the RI Incident Report form
- District RYE Chair will inform TAFE international Western Australia (T.I.W.A)
- District RYE Chair will inform the insurance company and complete the insurer Incident Report form

Procedures to follow for specific events

1. Abuse or harassment claim or allegation – (District Youth Protection Officer/ District Youth Exchange Chair to action)

Follow the District 9455 Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines for the District Youth Exchange Program.

RECEIVING AN ALLEGATION REPORT

Any adult to whom a program participant reports abuse or harassment must:

Listen attentively and stay calm. Acknowledge that it takes courage to report abuse or harassment. Be encouraging, but remain neutral; do not express shock, horror, or disbelief.

Assure privacy but not confidentiality. Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse or harassment to make it stop and ensure that it doesn't happen to others.

Get the facts, but don't interrogate. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Reassure the young person that he or she did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking "why" questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives. Remember that your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities.

Be nonjudgmental and reassure. Avoid criticizing anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved. It's especially important not to blame or criticize the young person. Emphasize that it was not his or her fault and that it was brave and mature to come to you.

Document the allegation. Record the conversation, including the date and time, as soon after the report as you can. Try to record the young person's exact words.

ALLEGATION RESPONSE

The following steps must be taken immediately after alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer, while others should be performed by a district officer, as specified.

i. Protect the young person.

Ensure the safety and well-being of the young person by removing him or her from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for his or her safety and is not a punishment.

Take immediate action to ensure the young person's health and well-being, and get him or her medical or psychological care, if necessary.

ii. Report the allegations to appropriate authorities.

Immediately report all cases of abuse or harassment — first to [designate appropriate law enforcement authority] for investigation and then to club and district leaders for follow-through. Interrogations related to allegations of abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement agencies.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is Club Youth Protection Officer, who is responsible for seeking advice from and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of this Rotarian, the district governor or District Youth Protection Officer should be the first Rotary contact.

District 9455 will cooperate with police or legal investigations.

District 9455 has researched local, state, and national laws related to youth protection, including reporting allegations.

iii. Remove the accused person from contact with youth.

District 9455 will remove the alleged offender from all contact with Rotary youth program participants until the matter is resolved.

Follow established criteria and procedures for removing a Rotary Youth Exchange student from a host family if they report a problem with, or make an allegation against, a host family member. If appropriate, move the student to the temporary housing that was screened in advance.

iv. Avoid gossip and blame.

Don't tell anyone about the allegation other than those who need to know. Be careful to protect the rights of both the victim and the accused during the investigation.

District 9455 maintains the privacy (as distinct from confidentiality) of any accused person.

v. Follow through.

A district officer must inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours and provide ongoing status reports.

District 9455 will ensure that the program participant's parents or legal guardians have been notified and offer the young person an independent, non-Rotarian counsellor to represent his or her interests.

If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, or if the investigation is inconclusive, the district governor will appoint a district review committee to coordinate an independent review to ensure that district youth protection policies were followed, confirm that youth safety was the highest priority, and determine any necessary modifications to district procedures. This review is not responsible for determining the validity of any allegations; that can only be done by youth protection agency personnel or trained law enforcement professionals. If law enforcement has found the allegations to be noncriminal, the district governor is responsible for contacting the alleged offender. The district governor may delegate this task to a district youth protection officer or district review committee.

District 9455 will document all accusations of inappropriate behaviour and the actions taken to resolve the situation, so that patterns of inappropriate behaviour are identified and addressed.

2. Death of a student – (District Governor/District Youth Exchange Chair to action)

- Ascertain that the deceased is the exchange student
- Be aware that due to modern communication systems, i.e. Internet, mobile phones, etc., the normal procedures may be circumvented by involved persons without knowing the consequences of their actions
- Arrange assistance including appropriate grief counselling to the host family, Mentor and all involved with the student and his/her welfare including other students and families or host families as required and advised
- Notify schools where other students attend for preparation of grief counselling for students and friends
- Check with local police for local regulations and obtain a copy of the police report
- Reclaim the deceased's possessions, especially the passport
- Check with the local hospital and mortuary for the claiming of the body and regarding an autopsy
- Obtain the death certificate
- Check with insurer with regard repatriation of remains and as to their procedure
- Contact an internationally licensed funeral home for arrangements in accordance with the parents' wishes
- Contact the relevant Embassy and insurer in respect of the repatriation of the student's remains
- Obtain clear instructions concerning, burial, cremation or return of body. Consideration must be given to the religion of the deceased. The sponsoring District representative should contact the student's family due to possible language or interpretative limitations
- Arrange to host the student's parents with Rotarians and host families. Also ask about arranging a memorial service
- Repatriation – Family decisions will be respected in relation to repatriation requests. It should be noted that there is significant cost in repatriating a body internationally. Bodies must be transported in refrigerated conditions in lead lined special coffins and transporting remains in this fashion incurs considerable expense. If families can culturally and emotionally deal with cremation most of the obstacles of repatriation are minimised. In most circumstances a family member would travel internationally to deal with the matters around the death and could return home personally with the body or cremated remains

3. Serious illness – (Club Mentor/District Youth Exchange Chair to action)

- The student's Mentor and/Host Parent/s are likely to be present
- Obtain advice and instructions in regard to surgery if required. Liaise with natural parents and sponsor District representative
- Provide such counselling and support for the student, Host Parents and all parties involved in the student's welfare as required

4. Natural disasters/terrorism – (District Governor/District Youth Exchange Chair to action)

- Local protocols will be followed. Directions given by police, State Emergency Service and Ambulance personnel etc will be adhered to
- If a major natural disaster or act of terrorism occurs within the country of exchange, but doesn't affect the student, natural parents need to be informed that their student was not involved.

5. Criminal behaviour – (District Governor/District Youth Exchange Chair to action)

- The Mentor or Host Parent should be with the student at the police station in the event that the student is interviewed
- Appropriate legal representation for the student should be arranged if required
- Provide support for the student including medical and psychological support where required

General points to consider

Continuing professional care of involved students and families

- Arrangements must be made for continuing care for involved students and families
- Offer at least one professional counselling session for each involved student and family

Media coverage - Anonymity of students from media

- Appoint one person only, i.e. District Youth Protection Officer, to provide information to media
- This person must be familiar with the laws regarding name release and have contact with the authorities
- Everyone involved in the administration of the incident must defer comments to the appointed media officer
- Appoint one person, i.e. District Youth Exchange Chairman, to provide information about the Rotary Youth Exchange Program.