



Code of conduct

1. Overview

Victoria has compulsory minimum standards that will apply to organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from all forms of abuse. The Child Safe Standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry of 2015.

The Child Safe Standards require organisations that provide services for children to have a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

This code of conduct outlines the expected standards for appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children, including online conduct.

2. The code

(i) Code requirements

All members of the Rotary District 9800 Youth Exchange Committee (**YEC**) and all other volunteers involved in the Rotary District 9800 Youth Exchange program, who are all collectively called for the purposes of this code of conduct "YEX Members", are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as set out in this code.

All YEX Members are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- treating everyone with respect.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination), in addition to the safety of children with a disability
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the YEC Chairman and ensure that any allegation is reported to the police.
- reporting any child safety concerns to the YEC Chairman.
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child is safe.
- encouraging children to “have a say” and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

(ii) Code prohibitions

All YEX members shall not

- develop a relationship with children that could be interpreted as favouritism.
- exhibit behaviour with children which may be construed as unnecessary physical contact.
- put children at risk of abuse.
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

(iii) What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

Allegation Reporting Guidelines

Any adult to whom a student reports an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment must follow these reporting guidelines which replicate Appendix 1 of the Rotary District 9800 Youth Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy (Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines)

Receive the report

- Members must listen attentively; stay calm and acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse or harassment. Members must be encouraging; not express shock, horror, or disbelief.
- Members must assure privacy but not confidentiality and explain that the member will have to tell someone about the abuse/harassment in order to make it stop and ensure that it doesn't happen to others.

- Members must obtain all facts, but not interrogate, by asking questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where, and how. Members must reassure the student that he or she did the right thing in reporting the incident. Members must avoid asking “why” questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the student’s motives. The Member’s responsibility is to present the story to the proper authorities.
- Members must be nonjudgmental and reassuring and avoid criticising anything that has happened or anyone alleged to be involved. It is especially important that Members not blame or criticise the student. Members must emphasise that the situation was not the student’s fault and that it was brave and mature to report the alleged incident.
- Members must document the allegation in a written record of the conversation, including the date and time, as soon as possible after the member received the report. Members must try to use the student’s words and record only what the student informed the Member.

Protecting the student

- Members must ensure the safety and well-being of the student by removing the student from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with the alleged abuser or harasser.
- Members must reassure the student that this is being done for the student’s safety and is not a punishment.

Report the allegations to appropriate authorities; child protection or law enforcement

- Members must immediately report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment; first to the appropriate law enforcement authorities for investigation and to the VRQA and then to the host club and district leadership for follow-through.
- In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the student’s counsellor who is responsible for seeking the advice of appropriate agencies and interacting with them. If the allegation involves the conduct of this Rotarian, the YEC Chairman or District Governor should be the first Rotary contact.
- District 9800 must cooperate with police, VRQA and legal investigations.

Avoid gossip and blame

- Members must not talk to anyone about the report other than those required by this Code of Conduct and the D9800 Policy. Members must take care to protect the rights of both the alleged victim and the accused during the investigation.

Do not challenge the alleged offender.

- Members 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 Governor is responsible for follow-through and will contact the alleged offender after the student has been moved to a safe environment.
- The District Governor may designate this task to a District Youth Exchange Protection Officer or District Protection Committee.

Follow-through Procedures

Either the YEC Chairman or District Youth Exchange Protection Officer must ensure that the following steps are taken immediately after an abuse allegation is reported.

1. Confirm that the student has been removed from the situation immediately and has no contact with the alleged abuser or harasser.
2. If law enforcement agencies will not investigate, the District Youth Exchange Protection Officer or District Protection Committee should coordinate an independent review of the allegations.
3. Ensure that the student receives immediate support services.
4. Offer the student an independent, non-Rotarian counsellor to represent the student's interests. Ask social services or law enforcement to recommend someone who is not a Rotarian or in any way involved with the youth program.
5. Contact the student's parents or legal guardian. If the student is away from home, the student and the student's parents should decide whether to stay in country or return home. If the student stays in country, written authorisation from the student's parents or legal guardian is required. If the student and the student's parents choose for the student to return home, consult with police before making travel arrangements. If an investigation is pending, the police may not approve of the student leaving the country.
6. Remove alleged abuser or harasser from all contact with any other young participants in Rotary programs and activities while investigations are conducted.

7. Cooperate with the police or legal investigation.
8. Inform the District Governor of the allegation. Either the District Governor, District Youth Exchange Protection Officer, or District Youth Program Chair must inform RI of the allegation within 72 hours and provide follow-up reports of steps taken and the status of investigations.
9. After the authorities have completed their investigation, D9800 must follow through to make sure the situation is being addressed. Specifically, District 9800 will conduct an independent and thorough review of any allegations of sexual abuse or harassment.

Post allegation report considerations

Responding to the needs of the youth program participant

District 9800 will adopt a cohesive and managed team approach to supporting a student after an allegation report. The student is likely to feel embarrassed or confused and may become withdrawn.

After a report of harassment or abuse, students may have mixed feelings about remaining on their exchange. If they do choose to stay, they may or may not want to continue their relationship with their hosting Rotary club. In some cases, a student may wish to remain in country but change to a different host club.

Although club members and host families may have trouble understanding how the student is feeling, the student would find it helpful to know that the club continues to be reassuring and supportive.

Club members and host families may feel ambivalent about their roles and unclear about their boundaries. However, they need to do whatever is necessary to reassure the student of their support at all times.

Addressing issues within the Host Club

When addressing an allegation of abuse or harassment, the most important concern is the safety of the student and Host Club members must not speculate or offer personal opinions that could potentially hinder any police or criminal investigations; members must not become involved in investigations.

Making comments about an alleged victim in support of an alleged abuser violates both the Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth and Rotary ideals. Comments made against an alleged abuser could lead to legal proceedings against a Rotarian or Host Club.

By observing these standards the Member acknowledges his or her responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the YEC Chairman or if that is not appropriate, the District Governor of District 9800 .

I agree with the contents of, and agree to adhere to the terms of, this Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date: