

**41.080. Youth Exchange**

*This is a structured program of Rotary International, adopted by the Board in 1974.*

*Note: The Board regularly reviews and amends, where necessary, "Youth Exchange Program Guidelines," which are as follows:*

**Guidelines for the Youth Exchange Program**

The Board of Directors of Rotary International has established recommended guidelines to assist clubs and districts in implementing their Youth Exchange activities.

The Board, with a view to promoting Youth Exchange as an opportunity for the development of international understanding, encourages Governors to appoint district Youth Exchange officers or committees, and to provide to the general secretary early in the year the names and addresses of such officers or committee chairs. The general secretary should publish annually a list of all Youth Exchange officers or district exchange committee chairs serving one district, more than one district, or all the districts in one country. This list should be revised and distributed annually to Governors and to those who are included in the list. This list will exclude districts that have not met district certification requirements.

The district Youth Exchange officers, or committees, are under the supervision of their respective Governors and should report to them.

The Board encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in Youth Exchange programs and other youth projects where and when this is possible and agreed upon between the sponsoring and receiving clubs or districts. The Board recommends that Governors appoint one member of their district Youth Exchange committee to be responsible for encouraging and aiding in the participation of people with disabilities in both long-term and short-term exchanges. Employment regulations in various countries make it impractical for Rotary clubs and districts to engage in any international youth exchange programs in which participants are paid wages. However, individual Rotarians may provide support to other organizations that are properly equipped to undertake this type of the international exchange of youth.

The general secretary shall maintain a district certification program. The certification process requires all district Youth Exchange programs to provide Rotary International with evidence that they have adopted the certification guidelines in their long-term and short-term exchange programs and in any tours and camps. All club and district Youth Exchange programs must comply with RI sexual abuse and harassment prevention policies and other requirements set forth by the general secretary in order to be certified. If local circumstances are such that a district cannot meet any of the guidelines, they must provide the general secretary in writing evidence of the specific circumstances that prohibit compliance. This district must develop alternative procedures that maintain the intent of these guidelines and provide to the general secretary in writing an explanation of these procedures. The general secretary may grant waivers to districts that have implemented alternative policy and alternative procedures that meet the intent of RI policy in instances when RI policy is contrary to local law and customs. The general secretary will evaluate and determine whether the alternatives posited by districts meet the intent of the policy, and may bring matters to the Board should circumstances warrant. In circumstances

where districts may only wish to send Youth Exchange students without serving as hosts for inbound students, the general secretary may waive certification requirements related to inbound students in these districts. In circumstances in multi-country districts where not all countries within the district wish to participate in the Youth Exchange program, the general secretary may waive certification requirements for non-participating countries in these districts.

Clubs and districts are strongly encouraged to consult legal counsel regarding liability issues before undertaking Youth Exchange activities. Districts must secure general liability insurance for the district Youth Exchange program with coverage and limits appropriate for their geographic location. Youth Exchange programs in certified districts located entirely within the United States are covered under the U.S. Rotary Club and District General Liability Insurance Program. (Through 30 June 2007 Youth Exchange programs in provisionally-certified and noncertified districts are also covered.)

In addition, districts must establish a corporation or similar formal legal entity that includes the district Youth Exchange program. This requirement may be met by incorporating the district Youth Exchange program, a group of programs that includes Youth Exchange, or the district as a whole in accordance with *Rotary Code of Policies* 17.020. Districts may also meet this requirement by affiliation with an incorporated multidistrict Youth Exchange program for the districts' activities that are conducted within the scope of the multidistrict program.

The following guidelines are provided to assist clubs and districts undertaking Youth Exchange activities. These guidelines pertain to all types of exchanges, including long-term and short-term exchanges.

1. A Rotary Youth Exchange program is not a privilege for sons and daughters of Rotarians only, but welcomes any young people who meet the requirements of the program and who are recommended and sponsored by a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or a district. For the long-term exchange program, school attendance is considered mandatory.
2. Careful selection of all individuals involved in Rotary Youth Exchange programs should be of paramount concern and be done with the utmost care and consideration. Selection procedures should occur in a similarly thorough manner for both the long-term and short-term exchange programs.
  - a. All adults (Rotarian and non-Rotarians) involved in the program, including but not limited to committee members, host families, club counselors, and others, must be interviewed to determine suitability to work with youth, complete and sign a Youth Volunteer Agreement, and agree to undergo background checks, including law enforcement public record checks and a reference check.
  - b. Exchange candidates of ages acceptable to both sending and receiving districts and according to the laws and regulations of both countries must submit a written application and must undergo a selection process including personal interviews with the applicant and the applicant's parents or legal guardians at the club level and at the district level.

- c. The hosting Rotary club or district must conscientiously screen and select host families on the basis of a written application, background checks for all adults in the home, including law enforcement public record checks and reference checks, personal interview, and home visits. Host families must receive training that includes information on program administration and rules and abuse and harassment awareness and prevention. For long-term exchanges, it is required for an exchangee to have more than one host family; three successive host families is preferable. For short-term exchange homestay programs, one family is usually sufficient. In long-term exchanges, parents of outbound students shall not be required to host incoming students. However, parents of outbound students may volunteer to host or may be asked to assist in finding suitable host families.
    - d. For both the long-term and short-term exchange programs, the sponsoring and hosting Rotary club must select an individual Rotarian counselor for each exchangee to be in regular contact with the exchangee and to serve as a liaison between the exchangee and the Rotary club, natural family, host family and community at large. The club counselor must not be a member of the student's host family and must be trained in responding to any problems or concerns which may arise during the exchange, including the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.
3. The sending Rotary club or district is responsible for ensuring that each exchangee is accepted and hosted by a receiving Rotary club or district. The sending Rotary club or district must also organize a mandatory orientation for the long-term and short-term exchangees and their parents or legal guardians prior to departure. This orientation must inform the participants about the rules, procedures and expectations associated with the Rotary Youth Exchange program and should include a briefing about the local Rotary club and its activities. The sending club or district must provide abuse prevention and awareness training for both students and parents or legal guardians. The receiving Rotary club or district must also provide an orientation program for incoming exchangees. Orientation for incoming exchangees must also include details about the appointed counselor's contact information if the student does encounter any aspects of neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Because local laws and customs in one country may differ greatly from those in other parts of the world, orientation for both the longterm and short-term exchangees must include information on local laws and customs, which may apply to young people.
4. The parents or legal guardians of each exchangee shall provide travel insurance, providing medical and dental coverage for accidental injury and illness, death benefits (including repatriation of remains), disability/dismemberment benefit (also known as capital benefits), emergency medical evacuation, emergency visitation expenses, 24-hour emergency assistance services, and legal liability (covering the student for any of his or her acts or omissions in connection with the Youth Exchange program), with respect to each exchangee in amounts satisfactory to the host Rotary club or district in consultation with the sponsor Rotary club or district, with coverage from the time of the exchangee's departure from home until the exchangee's return home. Evidence of coverage and level and limits of coverage of all insurance with a responsible insurance company or companies satisfactory to the host Rotary club or district prior to the beginning of the exchange shall be submitted to, received

by, and accepted by the host Rotary club or district and the sponsor Rotary club or district prior to the exchangee's departure from home. Such travel insurance shall provide overseas medical and dental coverage for accidental injury and illness, death benefits (including repatriation of remains), disability/dismemberment benefit (also known as capital benefits), emergency medical evacuation, emergency visitation expenses (for transportation of parent or guardian to student's location), 24-hour emergency assistance services, and legal liability. At the option of the parents or legal guardians, such insurance may also include cancellation expenses, loss of property, loss of money, or kidnap, and ransom.

5. The parents or legal guardians of the exchangee are responsible for providing appropriate clothing and round-trip transportation to and from the host district.
6. The exchangee should undertake no travel outside the immediate area of the community in which the receiving Rotary club is located without the consent of the exchangee's parents or legal guardians and of the participating Rotary clubs or districts.
7. The exchangee **SHOULD NOT** under any circumstances be permitted to operate or drive a motorized vehicle of ANY kind during the period of the exchange, nor to own a motorized vehicle in the host country.
8. Participation in extreme sports, such as hang gliding, rock climbing, and bungee jumping, is discouraged. If students are allowed to participate in extreme sports, these activities should be undertaken with the hosting districts' and parents' written permission, and adequate insurance should be required.
9. The exchangee and the prospective host family should communicate with each other before the exchangee leaves home.
10. The host family should provide room and board for the exchangee and exercise appropriate supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the exchangee's well-being.
11. All individuals involved in the exchange, including exchangees and their parents or legal guardians, host family members and Rotarian counselors, must agree in writing to all the requirements of the program as determined by the sending and receiving Rotary clubs or districts. All participants should display comportment at all times reflecting credit on self, the home country, and Rotary and should respect each other and act responsibly, befitting their role in the program. Exchangees should strive to adapt to the way of life, including language acquisition, of the host country and host family members should assist exchangees in ways to ease that transition. The exchangee should accept the supervision and authority of the host family and the receiving Rotary club or district during the period of the exchange. Exchangees must return home at a time and by a route agreed upon by their parents or legal guardians and the receiving Rotary club or district.
12. Any participant who does not comply with the requirements of the program should be removed from participation in the program. In the case of exchangees, they should be

returned home by the receiving Rotary district at the earliest practical time by a route agreed upon between the parents or legal guardians and the sponsoring Rotary club or district. All parties involved in the exchange, including hosting and receiving Rotary clubs and districts, host families and the exchangee's parents or legal guardians, must be fully informed prior to the exchangee being sent home. In the case of adult volunteers (both Rotarian and non-Rotarian), those who have not complied with program requirements will be permanently removed from involvement with youth.

13. All serious incidents, including but not limited to, accidents, death, early returns, and crimes, and any allegations of abuse or harassment shall be reported by the district to RI within 72 hours of the time a district officer learns of the incident. Districts must identify a person within the district who will be responsible for reporting to RI.
14. All Rotarians and Rotary clubs involved in establishing short-term and long-term exchange activities are urged to ensure that preliminary agreements accurately reflect what they expect from the group with which the exchange is arranged, especially in the area of selection and orientation.
15. The hosting and sending Rotary club or districts must provide exchangees with a list of individuals to contact in the case of a problem or emergency. For both the long-term and short-term exchangees, this list must include the name and contact information for the exchangee's Rotarian counselor, hosting Rotary club president, hosting district chair, hosting governor, sponsoring district chair, sponsoring governor, sponsoring club president and two non-Rotarian resource persons (one male and one female). This list must also include local resources for medical, dental and mental health care and law enforcement professionals. Where available, this list should also include local resources, suicide prevention hotlines, rape crisis hotlines, and local child protection agencies.
16. Clubs and districts are encouraged to use the standard Youth Exchange applications for both the long-term and short-term exchange programs which can be obtained from the Secretariat. Districts must provide to RI a copy of the Guarantee Form of the standard Youth Exchange applications for each inbound student hosted by the district prior to the beginning of an exchange.
17. Participants should be between the ages of 15 and 19 at the beginning of the exchange unless the laws and regulations of a specific country deem otherwise, or a different age range is mutually agreed upon by the participating Rotary clubs or districts. They should be above average in their schoolwork, preferably in the upper third of their school class. Long-term exchanges should be for one academic year but may be extended to include part or all of the holiday periods immediately preceding and immediately following the academic year.
18. For long-term exchanges, the hosting club should provide for all educational expenses, arrange an appropriate academic program, and provide a program of orientation and continued contacts to familiarize the exchangee with the host community. For short-term

exchanges, the hosting club should also provide a program of orientation and continued contact to familiarize the exchangee with the host community.

19. For long-term exchanges, the receiving Rotary club or district should provide a modest monthly allowance for the exchangee in an amount to be jointly determined by the parties concerned. Where meals eaten at school are not otherwise provided for, the monthly allowance should be sufficient to include the cost of such meals.
20. Due to the likely effects of reverse culture shock, following their return, long-term and short-term exchangees and their parents or legal guardians should be encouraged to attend a meeting conducted by the district Youth Exchange committee for debriefing of recently returned exchangees for the purpose of assisting them to return to their home, school, and community environment.
21. For long-term exchanges, both sending and receiving club or district should require, at a minimum, quarterly reports from the exchangees. This report should include information on their current hosts, feelings, concerns, ideas and suggestions regarding their exchange experience thus far. The designated Youth Exchange Officer should review the reports carefully and, when necessary, take action to respond to any irregularities reported by the students.
22. It is recognized that many successful exchanges are made for less than a full academic year and that in the interest of international understanding and goodwill, not all programs need be reciprocal. By mutual consent of the parties concerned, any of the responsibilities indicated may be assigned to someone other than the party specified.
23. Any other provisions consistent with the foregoing and which are deemed necessary or convenient for the operation of an exchange program may be adopted by the Rotary clubs or districts concerned. (*November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 64*)

Source: March 1997 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 275; Amended by November 2002 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 99; June 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 260; November 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 108; March 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 218; June 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 271; June 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 248; November 2006 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 72; June 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 274; November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 32; November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 64. See also May 1979 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 355. June 1982 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 394; July 1982 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47; February 1983 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 277; October 1984 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; November 1987 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 174

#### 41.080.1. Governors' Preparation

Governors are encouraged to use the period between their nomination and assuming office to learn as much as possible about the Youth Exchange Program in the district and the qualifications and skills of those who administer it. (*June 1998 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 348*)

Source: October-November 1977 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 159

41.080.2. Involvement by Persons with Disabilities

The Board favors the involvement of persons with disabilities in the Youth Exchange Program where and when this is possible and agreed upon by the sponsoring and receiving clubs or districts. (*June 1998 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 348*)

Source: May 1979 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 355

41.080.3. Liability Insurance

Clubs and districts are urged to consult legal counsel regarding liability questions before undertaking Youth Exchange activities, including advice relative to the desirability of securing liability insurance. Inbound clubs, districts, and multidistrict youth exchange groups should determine the minimum level of insurance adequate for the exchange length and local conditions in which the youth exchange student will live and travel during the exchange. (*November 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 58*)

Source: July 1982 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 47; June 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 260; Affirmed by March 2005 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 218

41.080.4. Multidistrict Youth Exchange Program

Each governor has the responsibility for the supervision and control of the Youth Exchange Program within the district. It is recognized that there may be instances where clubs in two districts wish to cooperate in jointly undertaking an activity or program. The Board has no objection to such cooperative effort, provided any activity or project is not undertaken as a joint activity or project unless two-thirds of the clubs in each such district have first approved participation in such joint activity or project. Furthermore, the governors of the respective districts shall have secured in advance specific authorization of the general secretary acting on behalf of the Board to undertake and participate in such activity or project. Each such proposal to the Board shall be evaluated on its merits.

The general secretary may remove a district from a multidistrict Youth Exchange activity upon notice that they have failed to comply with the district certification program with or without the consent of the district governor.

Multidistrict activities shall be administered by a committee composed of current district Youth Exchange chairs and other officers appointed by the respective governors of participating districts. Such a multidistrict committee is responsible for reporting in writing not less often than annually on its work and finances to all governors in the participating districts. (*June 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 226*)

Source: May 1979 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 355; November 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 108; Amended by November 2001 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 45; June 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 226

41.080.5. International Travel by Youth Exchanges

No club shall assist or cooperate in sending a young person abroad on an international travel activity unless careful plans are made in advance covering every aspect of the proposed trip. In particular, no club should provide an identification card, letter of introduction, request for assistance or other credential or document intended to identify or introduce a young person to a

Rotary club or clubs in another country, unless complete mutual agreement has been reached in advance with respect to the hospitality or assistance to be provided by the host club

No club is obliged to provide hospitality or assistance to any young person from another country, despite any documented or claimed sponsorship of a Rotary club, unless the receiving club has specifically agreed in advance to provide such hospitality or assistance. It is the prerogative of any club to determine what assistance, if any, it will offer to young persons.  
(*June 1998 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 348*)

Source: May 1979 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 355

#### 41.080.6. Youth Exchange Committee

The president should appoint annually a Youth Exchange Committee to advise the Board on all aspects of the Youth Exchange program and to develop program content for the annual Youth Exchange Officers' pre-convention meeting. (*November 2001 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 45*)

Source: June 2001 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 393

#### 41.080.7. Pre-Convention Youth Exchange Officers Meeting

The annual pre-convention Youth Exchange officers meeting, as part of the official convention program, should be conducted in accordance with RI policy regarding convention operations and procedures. The general secretary is requested to provide staff support for such meeting.  
(*June 2002 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 266*)

Source: June 1976 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 50; November 1978 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 150; November 1990 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 91; Amended by June 2001 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 393 and June 2002 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 266

#### 41.080.8. Officer and Staff Attendance at Youth Exchange Officers Regional Meetings

A current or past RI officer selected by the president and a staff person should attend regional meetings of Youth Exchange officers on a periodic basis. (*November 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 108*)

Source: November 1994 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 75; Amended by November 2004 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 108

#### 41.080.9. New Generations Exchange Program

The Board has approved guidelines for the New Generations Exchange Program serving the 18-25 population as an additional opportunity for clubs and districts within the Youth Exchange Program. These guidelines are as follows:

This new opportunity under the auspices of the Youth Exchange Program of RI is part of the overall emphasis on the New Generations. It will serve the 18-25 year old population, which is not generally served by the current Youth Exchange Program, which focuses on the 15-19 age group level, or the Group Study Exchange Program, which primarily serves the 25-40 year age group. Some sociologists point out that the 18-25 years are the most critical years.

Mechanics of the program:

1. Club-to-club and district-to-district arrangement as approved by the incumbent governor(s).

2. New Generations persons between the ages of 18-25 are eligible.
3. The exchange shall be for a short-term duration of from three to six weeks.
4. The exchange may be singly or in groups.
5. Transportation from one district to another or from one club to another club in another district shall be borne by the sending club or district.
6. The host or receiving district shall host the New Generations exchange members in homes for meals, lodging and local transportation. The schedule of activity for the visitors shall be people-to-people contact related to Rotary activities, for goodwill and understanding and for better cultural education and exposure.
7. Orientation shall be done by a district officer appointed by the governor for the outbound member(s) and for the inbound member(s).
8. The exchange period shall be with mutual understanding of the two governors.  
*(November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 64)*

Source: March 1997 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 235; Amended by November 2007 Mtg., Bd. Dec. 64

### **Cross References**

*2.110. Youth Protection*

*21.040.1. Youth Exchange Committees and Officers*