



Student Protection Policy

Revised April 1, 2006

Eastern States Student Exchange Program, Inc.

Introduction

Beginning with the 2006-2007 Rotary year, all clubs and districts that wish to participate in Youth Exchange are required to be certified by RI. To apply for certification, each district will need to submit:

1. District student protection policy,
2. Copies of all materials produced in the district to promote and support the Youth Exchange program (promotional materials and brochures, applications, policies, Web site links, host family screening reports, position/job descriptions, etc.),
3. A signed compliance statement that the district is operating the Youth Exchange program in accordance with RI policy, and
4. The completed annual Youth Exchange survey

ESSEX will provide to Rotary International its documents for all of the above except #3.

Individual Districts will need to provide to Rotary International the compliance statement and any copies of any district developed promotional materials and brochures, applications, policies, Web site links, host family screening reports, position/job descriptions, etc.).

Developing an effective student Protection policy for the Eastern States Student Exchange was a critical first step in this certification process. The next step is for member district's to adopt the ESSEX policy or use it as a basis to develop its own policy that can be more stringent than the ESSEX policy. Implementing an effective policy is a tangible demonstration of a district's commitment to protecting youth while offering them an unparalleled opportunity to meet people from other lands and experience other cultures. This document provides a basic framework in keeping with RI Board policy for districts to follow in developing or refining district student protection policies.

Districts that already have such a policy may wish to compare it to this policy and the RI Guidelines to ensure that all the areas that the RI Board requires are covered.



Student Protection Policy

Policy Framework

1. Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth (each district is required to abide by this statement)

The Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. It is the duty of all Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses, partners, and any other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and young people with whom they come into contact.

In order to maintain membership in ESSEX, each member district must endorse the ESSEX student protection policy or will be required to develop its own policy that is more stringent and has each of the following elements to meet RI Board policy.

2. Definitions

Volunteer: Any adult involved with Rotary Youth Exchange activities who has direct interactions with students. This includes, but is not limited to, club and district Youth Exchange officers and committee members, Rotarian counselors, Rotarians and non-Rotarians, their spouses and partners that host students for activities or outings or who might drive students to events or functions, host parents, and other adult residents of the host home (including siblings and other family members). In general, background checks need not be conducted for adults who will have only casual or occasional group interactions with Youth Exchange students. This may include, for example, Rotarians present at a club meeting attended by Youth Exchange students.

Student: Youth involved with Rotary Youth Exchange, regardless of whether they are of the age of majority.

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:

- ◆ Non-touching offenses
- ◆ Indecent exposure
- ◆ Exposing a student to sexual or pornographic material

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

3. Incorporation of District Youth Exchange Program and Liability Insurance

The multidistrict Eastern States Student Exchange Program, Inc. (aka Eastern States Student and Exchange or ESSEX) is an incorporated entity under the rules of the State of New York.

It is not generally required for a member district Youth Exchange program to incorporate or establish itself as a similar formal legal entity (Ltd., etc.) if the multidistrict does all of the roles necessary to support Youth Exchange and the district is not doing any activities independent or in addition to the activities of the multidistrict.

Separately incorporating Youth Exchange programs should add a section that provides basic information to that effect. For example,

Rotary District _____ Youth Exchange program is incorporated as Rotary District _____ Youth Exchange Program, Incorporated and is incorporated under the laws of the state/province/country of _____.

The ESSEX districts located wholly within the United States are already covered under the U.S. Rotary Club and District General Liability Insurance Program. Districts wholly or partly outside of the United States must provide liability coverage for those activities located outside of the United States. In addition, each district program may carry additional general liability insurance with coverage and limits appropriate for its geographic location.

4. Volunteer Selection and Screening

The Eastern States Student Exchange, Inc. (ESSEX) requires that each member district maintain a volunteer selection and screening process. The following screening steps must be completed prior to participation in Youth Exchange activities. (A sample of a *Youth Volunteer Affidavit* form can be found in *Appendix A*.)

Member districts will maintain all records of criminal background checks, waivers, and screening for adults working with minors for a period of ten years.

All volunteers interested in participating in a District Youth Exchange program must:

- ◆ Complete a *Youth Volunteer Affidavit* form and authorize the district to conduct a criminal background check (subject to local laws and practices). In general, background checks need not be conducted for adults who will have only casual or occasional group interactions with Youth Exchange students. This may include, for example, Rotarians present at a club meeting attended by Youth Exchange students.
- ◆ Undergo personal interviews.

- ◆ Provide a list of references for the district to check.
- ◆ Meet RI and district eligibility requirements for working with students. RI requires that any volunteer who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment be prohibited from working with youth in a Rotary context. If an individual is accused of sexual abuse or harassment, and the investigation into the claim is inconclusive, then, for the safety of youth participants and the protection of the accused, additional safeguards must be put in place to assure the protection of any youth with whom the individual may have future contact. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated to participate in youth programs. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position.
- ◆ Understand and comply with RI and district guidelines for the Youth Exchange program.

Host families must meet the following selection and screening requirements, in addition to those listed above.

- ◆ Host families must undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability for hosting exchange students. This should include:
 - Demonstrated commitment to the safety and security of students
 - Motivation for hosting a student is consistent with Rotary ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange
 - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student
 - Aptitude for providing appropriate supervision and parental responsibility that ensures the student's well being
- ◆ Host families must complete a written application.
- ◆ Home visits must be conducted for each family and should include both announced and unannounced visits, both prior to and during the placement. Home visits must be conducted annually, even for repeat host families.
- ◆ All adult residents of the host home must meet the selection and screening guidelines. This includes adult children of the host family and other members of the extended family that reside in the home either on a full- or part-time basis.

Rotarian counselors must meet the criteria for *All Volunteers*, as well as the following:

- ◆ Counselors must not be a member of the student's host family.
- ◆ Counselors should not be close friends or relatives to other volunteers involved with a particular student (i.e. school principal, host family, etc.).
- ◆ Counselors must be trained in responding to any problems or concerns which may arise during the exchange, which may include instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment.

5. Student Selection and Screening

All students interested in participating in programs of the Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) or its member Districts must:

- ◆ Complete a written application and be interviewed for their suitability for participation in the Youth Exchange program.
- ◆ Attend and participate in all district orientation and training sessions.

All parents or legal guardians of students interested in participating in the programs of the Eastern States Student Exchange or its member Districts must be interviewed to determine the student's suitability for participation in the Youth Exchange program.

6. Training

The Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) and its member Districts will provide student protection training to all Youth Exchange program participants. *Responsibility for assuring that appropriate training is conducted at all levels is assigned to the ESSEX Student Protection Officer. Within member districts, conducting training sessions may be assigned to the district Youth Exchange chair, district student protection officer, or district trainer.*

ESSEX member districts will:

- ◆ Adapt the *Student Protection Training Manual* (available in late 2005) to include relevant information on specific district guidelines, local customs, cultural issues, and legal requirements.
- ◆ Develop a calendar for training and define the frequency of training required for each volunteer position, including descriptions of who is to participate, when training should occur, and how training will be conducted.
- ◆ Conduct specialized training sessions for the following Youth Exchange program participants:
 - District governor
 - District Youth Exchange committee members
 - Club Youth Exchange committee members
 - Rotarian counselors
 - Other Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Youth Exchange activities, such as local tours or district events
 - Host families
 - Students (outbound and inbound)
 - Parents and legal guardians of students
 - Establish guidelines to ensure that all those required to be trained have participated.
 - Maintain records of participation to ensure compliance.
 - Assure that volunteers have been trained within the prior three years.
 - A district student protection officer can assume training responsibilities.

7. Allegation Reporting Guidelines

The Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) and its member districts are committed to protecting the safety and well being of Youth Exchange students and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously and must be handled in accord with the *Youth Exchange Student Protection Allegation Reporting Guidelines*, found in *Appendix B*.

8. Investigation Guidelines

The Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) and its member Districts take all allegations of abuse or harassment seriously and will investigate each allegation thoroughly. The districts will cooperate with all law enforcement, child protective services, and legal investigations, and will only conduct their own independent investigations such that it does not interfere with other investigations.

9. Other District Responsibilities

Each Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) member district:

- ◆ Has procedures for reporting, investigating, and proper handling of non-criminal offenses or historic cases that law enforcement will not investigate.
- ◆ Requires that all inbound Youth Exchange students maintain insurance at the following levels
Maximum lifetime benefit \$500,000; Accidental death \$10,000; medical evacuation \$50,000.
- ◆ Provides each student with a list of local services in the district (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, proper law enforcement agencies, community services, private services, etc.)
- ◆ Will complete a student data request form for all participating Youth Exchange students and return it to RI one month before the beginning of the exchange.
- ◆ Will provide students access to the ESSEX Student Protection Hotline (1-866-683-0533 or, if unavailable, 1-866-683-7501) and/or maintain and provide to Youth Exchange students a “district hotline.”
- ◆ Will follow RI guidelines for Youth Exchange Web sites and usage of the Rotary Marks.
- ◆ May appoint an independent lawyer, therapist or counselor to represent any alleged victim in cases of sexual abuse or harassment.
- ◆ Will report all criminal allegations to ESSEX Student Protection Officer, **Department of State**, and to RI within **24** hours.
- ◆ Will report all serious incidents (accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to the ESSEX Student Protection Officer and to RI within 72 hours.
- ◆ **All cases of harassment verified by the Student Protection Officer will be reported to RI.**
- ◆ Evaluate and review this policy and accompanying procedures on a regular basis.

10. Club Compliance

The Eastern States Student Exchange (ESSEX) member districts will monitor and ensure that all participating clubs within the district comply with RI guidelines for student protection. All clubs that wish to apply to the district for certification must provide the district with a copy of the following for review and approval:

- ◆ Copies of all materials produced in the club to promote and support the Youth Exchange program, including, but not limited to, promotional materials and brochures, applications, policies, Web site links, etc.
- ◆ List of services in the area (rape and suicide crisis hotline, alcohol and drug awareness programs for teenagers, proper law enforcement agencies, community services, private services)
- ◆ Club student protection training program

Participating clubs must agree to:

- ◆ Complete and return a signed compliance statement that the club is operating their program in accordance with the ESSEX, District and RI policy.
- ◆ Conduct reference checks and, if needed, criminal background checks, and for all volunteers involved with the program, including, but not limited to adult full-time residents of host home, counselor, club chair, and all Rotarians and their spouses or partners with direct unsupervised contact.
- ◆ All volunteers must complete and sign the *ESSEX Youth Volunteer Affidavit* found in *Appendix A*. In general, background checks need not be conducted for adults who will have only casual or occasional group interactions with Youth Exchange students. This may include, for example, Rotarians present at a club meeting attended by Youth Exchange students.
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive system for host family selection and screening that includes announced and unannounced home visits and interviews both prior to and during the placement.
- ◆ Conduct follow-up evaluations of both students and host families.
- ◆ Follow the *Youth Exchange Student Protection Reporting Guidelines* found in *Appendix B*.
- ◆ Report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment to the appropriate **law-enforcement** authorities immediately, then to the District Student Protection Officer and the leadership of the district and the club for investigation.
- ◆ Prohibit direct placement of students outside of the District Youth Exchange program structure (e.g. “backdoor exchanges”).
- ◆ Set procedures for removal of a student from the host family (criteria for moving a student and back-up temporary housing available in advance).
- ◆ Develop contingency plans for hosting that include pre-screened and available back-up families
- ◆ Ensure that all hosting is voluntary. Parents of outbound students and club members must not be required to host students.
- ◆ Ensure that long-term exchange students have multiple host families.
- ◆ Provide each student with a comprehensive local services list.
- ◆ Ensure that the host counselor is trained in responding to any problems or concerns that may arise during the exchange, including the prevention of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or harassment.
- ◆ Provide mandatory training on student protection for host families, outbound students, inbound students, and their parents or legal guardians.
- ◆ Provide the names and contact information of at least three people to contact for assistance with any issues or problems to all Youth Exchange students. These people must include both males and females, not related to each other, and individuals independent of the host family and club counselor.
- ◆ Follow RI guidelines for Youth Exchange Web sites and usage of the Rotary Marks (available in late 2005).
- ◆ Report all serious incidents (accidents, crimes, early returns, death) involving Youth Exchange students to the District Student Protection Officer immediately.
- ◆ Conduct interviews of all applicants and applicants’ parents or legal guardians.

- ◆ For long-term exchanges, three successive host families are preferable.

Please note that this policy is subject to change. Please contact ESSEX Youth Exchange staff to receive the most current copy:

ESSEX Student Protection Officer

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