



Rotary International
District 9700 Inc
Youth Exchange Committee
Handbook for Rotary Counsellor

COUNSELLOR HANDBOOK

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1. Introduction

Participation in the Youth Exchange Programme is a significant decision for a young person. The period from the application stage to their re-integration into their previous place in society involves considerable challenges, separation from all that is secure and familiar, and extends over a period of two years.

During this time it is important that Rotary provides a safe, familiar point of reference for the student to consult regarding matters that range from minor, for help in interpreting the mysteries of Rotary through to assistance in dealing with traumatic incidents that the student may encounter.

This role is undertaken by their counsellor. Each student will have two, one in their sponsor Rotary Club and one in their host Rotary Club.

Serving as liaison between the student, Rotary club, host family, and community at large, the Rotarian counsellor plays a crucial role in the success of the Youth Exchange programme.

The appointments should be made early in the application process and the same individual should continue throughout the exchange including the preparation and re-entry phases. This generally requires a commitment of that may extend for almost two years, often extending through three Rotary years.

2. Selection of Counsellors.

The process for recruiting and preparing a counsellor for both outbound and inbound students is detailed in District 9700 Inc Rotary Youth Programmemes Policy and Procedures. The Outbound Counsellor is detailed in Section 6.5.2.4 and the Inbound Counsellor in Section 6.5.3.2. The identification and preparation of a successful counsellor can not be achieved if the steps in those references are not undertaken early and in full.

3. Training of Counsellors

Rotarian counsellors may need to respond to a range of problems or concerns that may arise during the exchange, including allegations of abuse or harassment. Preliminary training is provided by the District Youth Exchange Committee to counsellors through printed material and counsellor training sessions. This should be completed before engagement with the student. General Sexual Harassment Prevention Awareness Training, delivered through the District Trainer, should be undertaken prior to appointment to the Counsellor Role. Additional training is provided by the District Youth Exchange Committee during Student training events. Counsellors for Inbound students should attend the orientation session conducted by the District Youth Exchange Committee shortly after the students' arrival. Counsellors for outbound students should attend part of the first District Committee Training Weekend for outbound students.

Normally, the role of counsellor is very rewarding and enriching. Being a counsellor is an exacting and personal task which individual Rotarians will handle in their own style.

4. Inbound Counsellor

4.1 Inbound Counsellor Roles

Ensure the Club's inbound student counsellor is a person who (if there are two people involved in counselling the following requirements apply to both)

- has a rapport with young people and is committed to the student's well being and happiness but also a
- person able to ensure, in a non-confrontational manner, that the student and host families abide by the Rotary rules and the student fulfils their obligations as a family and school member
- is of the same gender as the student or alternatively that the counsellor's partner will act in the capacity of counsellor or that another member of the Rotary Club of the same gender as the student will be appointed as an assistant counsellor
- is not a member of one of the student's host families (if a counsellor is to host a student an alternate counsellor must be appointed for the duration of the hosting);
- is able to be totally impartial in a dispute between the student and the host family
- is not the Club President, Youth Exchange Programme chair, the Principal or the teacher responsible for the student in the school the student attends;
- is prepared to greet the student on arrival and organise their settling in, school enrolment and in particular:
 - arrange the students Emergency Fund as directed by District Committee.
 - organise safe-keeping for the student's passport and airline tickets (after taking copies) as directed by District Committee
 - encourage the student to refrain from phoning home too frequently.
 - who has the time and commitment to talk with the student frequently and who facilitates the student's involvement with the Rotary Club
- is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the student is protected and treated kindly and fairly
- is prepared to undertake the required District training sessions
- is familiar with and able to implement, if necessary, RI's "Youth Exchange Sexual Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines" Form CL 8.

4.2 Inbound Counsellor Tasks

The counsellor's responsibilities occur in four phases:

- Prior to arrival
- On arrival
- During the exchange
- At the conclusion of the exchange
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The tasks may vary but the more important are detailed as follows.

4.2.1 Prior to arrival

- acquaint him/herself with the rules and guidelines of the Programme, and so be in a position to discuss such matters with the student and host families to provide proper guidance.
- Establish and maintain contact with inbound students before they arrive;
- Assist in the interviewing, screening, selection and orientation of potential host families;

- Arrange an opportunity for Host families to meet and discuss, together with experienced host families about the arrangements for the student;
- Establish contact with the student before departure or arrival, explaining the expectations of the club and the district; maintain and document regular contact (at least once a month);
- Ascertain from the District Youth Exchange Committee
 - General schedule of the exchange year, including district meetings, outings, travel opportunities, and other activities;
 - District rules, insurance requirements, and emergency fund and passport arrangements;
 - Expectations about speaking engagements at clubs;
 - Flight details including date, time and flight number;
- Ascertain from Club sources:
 - Name and contact information for the first host family
 - Practical information about climate, clothing, and school
 - General information about the community and country (local geography, history, government) and the culture (colloquial phrases, meaning of certain gestures, customary greetings, holiday traditions, social customs, religious beliefs and practices)
- Contact students welcoming them, and encourage communication between the student and the first host family and counsellor before the student's arrival. Sharing information collected and providing encouragement will aid establishment of links between these two key parties and ease the transition once the student arrives
- Keep the Host Club members acquainted of the preparations being made for the student, thus ensuring the Club's enthusiasm for the hosting is maintained
- Arrange a club welcome function but allow at least three days after arrival to reduce jet lag and culture shock.

4.2.2 On arrival

- Meet students at airport;
- Host the student during the first four to seven days to facilitate establishment of a trust relationship and to simplify completion of preliminary administration;
- Ensure the student telephones his/her parents and emails country co-ordinator in sponsor and host District Committee, as soon as possible, advising safe arrival. Facilitate their introduction to the first host family. Although pre-arrival correspondence can help ease this transition, both the student and the host family will be full of questions and apprehensions. The Interactive First Night Questions can help the host family and student work through some of the practicalities of the exchange/host family experience. These questions will introduce the issue of house rules and other important topics that should be addressed early in an exchange. Because many inbound students struggle with the language of the host country in the first weeks or months of an exchange, the questions should be provided in both the student's native language and the language of the host country. These are available at <http://www.rotary.org/EN/STUDENTSANDYOUTH/YOUTHPROGRAMMES/ROTARY/YOUTHEXCHANGE/Pages/FirstNightQuestions.aspx> .

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- Serve as liaison between the host Rotary club and the school the student attends;
 - Ensure student has the completed Acceptance Advice if Secondary Exchange Students (AASES) form;
 - Arrange an appointment to complete school enrolment with the school who provided the Guarantee when student was accepted by host club.
 - Accompany student when completing enrolment. When enrolling have Principal complete and submit AASES and request a copy of completed form for District Youth Exchange Committee records;
 - Guide the student in selecting suitable subjects;
 - Organise purchase and/or loan of school uniform;
- Counsel the student in matters such as choosing classes, making friends, and participating in activities;
- Collect students passport and hold until delivered to District Committee at first orientation session;
- Note visa details and inform student and club of departure window being not earlier than 11 months after entry date and not later than 5 days prior to visa expiry;
- Assist student to establish a personal bank account with debit card access;
- Oversee the establishment of direct deposit of monthly allowance for long-term exchange students to their bank account;
- Peruse Travel Insurance policy and ensure valid for term of exchange. Provide district committee with copy at Orientation weekend;
- Confirm District Committee holds Medibank card and monitor collection at orientation weekend and support student to attend Medibank office to activate cover;
- Accompany student to District Orientation training with District Youth Exchange Committee where training will include:
 - Rules and regulations for students established by the host club, district, and/or Multidistrict;
 - Consequences of breaking a programme rule;
 - Policy on student travel and forms and permission needed
 - Monthly allowance arrangements;
 - Host contact information for Rotarian counsellor, club youth director, club president, district chair and district governor;
 - Student's role as a Rotary ambassador;
 - Participation in Rotary club meetings and at local Rotary events;
 - Communications with home;
 - School attendance and participation in extracurricular activities;
 - Use of computers, Internet, e-mail;
 - Cultural Concerns including local customs and colloquial phrases;
 - Gender, personal hygiene, and health and safety;
 - Information on local laws and customs that apply to young people
 - Information on reporting incidents of abuse and harassment;
 - District 24-hour contact number and contact information for two non-Rotarian resource people, one male and one female;
 - Arrangements for accessing local medical, dental, and mental health professionals
 - Social service resources, where available, including suicide prevention hotlines, rape crisis hotlines, and child protection and law enforcement agencies

4.2.3 During the exchange

The Counsellor must:

- Maintain contact with District Committee inbound coordinator;
- Coordinate and maintain contact with host families throughout the student's exchange. These visits to the student in the host family's home should ensure that living arrangements are consistent with what was agreed upon during the screening and also seek to identify if there are issues of concern to either the family or the student;
- Maintain contact with the student at least once a month but preferably weekly. Document meeting and any significant issues. The counsellor should be available to the student at all times to answer questions or concerns about the host family or the school. Find a place to talk about such issues away from the host family;
- Each March, June, September and December consult host families, school and club and complete Quarterly Counsellor Report and forward the District Country Co-ordination with cc to District Chair.
- Diarise important dates including student birthday, anniversaries, national days and ensure the club acknowledges these and includes the student in Christmas celebrations.
- Help the student adapt to the culture and language;
- Work with the community and the student's school teachers to ensure that the student is involved in positive activities and community life;
- Create a supportive atmosphere in which the student feels comfortable discussing any concerns and ensuring they remain aware of abuse and harassment prevention techniques;
- Ensure the student is completing reports to host and/or sponsor district as required and is meeting any other obligations placed upon them as part of their exchange;
- When issues arise requiring discussions with the student, accompany the student as a mentor, and ensure a transcript of the counselling is provided to the Country Co-ordinator;
- Serve as an advocate for the student in any matter.
- Encourage members of the host club to communicate and engage regularly with the student;
- Invite students to cultural and social gatherings. Continue the orientation as needed to help the student cope with specific cultural issues.
- Help students make the transition from one host family to the next;
- Give the student advance notice, including an exact date for the move to next host family as early as possible.
- Arrange for the student to meet the family and visit their home before the move.
- Provide the new host family's contact information to the student and the student's parents or legal guardians and district country co-ordinator before the move.
- Use the same getting-acquainted activities with each new host family, including a discussion of the Interactive First Night Questions.
- Encourage host families to pass on details of friends and networks as well as details of social routines and sporting commitments;
- Help the student move all belongings to the new home.
- Confirm the student has no outstanding debts such as medical accounts or

family costs such as excessive telephone or internet charges;

- Send, from time to time, a note providing updates on the student to the student's natural parents. Visits by parents during the exchange are strongly discouraged and must not occur without approval of Sponsor and Host District Chair;
- It is not the counsellor's role to approve travel requests but should be an informed party to them. Approval hierarchy is, School Principal (where school is impacted) Host Parents, Club Youth Programme leader and Club President. Where travel is outside the district the application requires country co-ordinator support and District Chair approval. Activities such as abseiling, scuba diving, white water rafting and light aircraft activities are special activities requiring district and natural parent consent. Some activities, particularly those excluded from insurance cover are prohibited. Counsellors should ensure applications for travel are submitted as early as possible to allow the various people to be consulted in an orderly timeframe;
- It is possible that a counsellor and the student might not get along together. If this happens the counsellor should stand down in favour of another counsellor. The original counsellor should not regard this as failure or an indication of one's inefficiency as personalities can clash for no apparent reason. It is better to make the change in order to achieve a happier relationship.

4.2.4 Dealing with Early Returns

Approximately 3 percent of all exchange students return home early. Some leave because of homesickness, illness, or problems back home. Others are sent home because of problems that occur in country during the exchange. A student can be sent home for violating a District Youth Exchange programme rule or due to geopolitical crises or other health and safety issues that may arise during the exchange. However, a student must not be sent home solely for reporting problems, especially incidents of abuse or harassment.

In the worst case scenario, a student can be involved in a crime during an exchange. If a student is a witness to or victim of a crime, the decision to return early or stay should be left to the student and his or her parents. This choice is especially important for sexual assault victims, who may feel that being sent home early from the exchange is a punishment for reporting the crime. If a student elects to return home, confirm with local law enforcement that he or she isn't needed in country as a witness before making travel arrangements. If a student is accused of a crime, local law enforcement will determine if and when the student can leave the country. Although orientation on programme rules should always focus on the consequences of rule violations, breaking a rule is not always a reason to send a student home.

Early returns should be managed with great care and the process preceding any such decision requires the involvement, at an early stage, of the District Chair in both the sponsor and host districts. Where the issue relates to discipline, it is important a formal record be made detailing how these problems have been raised with the student. The record will include the nature of the issue, what support was provided to assist the student in resolving the concern and when the matter will be reviewed. Where any formal counselling process is undertaken the District Chair should be consulted and provided with a copy of the counselling record. The District Chair will alert the Sponsor District Chair of the general nature of the concern and the support action being taken.

Early return is a last resort. District Chairs will ensure that all options to avoid the early return have been attempted or explored, and that due process and procedural fairness to all parties is evident. **Clubs should not contact sponsor clubs nor the student's natural parents.** All disciplinary processes must be via the District Chair in host and sponsor districts. When the sending and hosting districts disagree about an early return, district governors will be notified and assist in achieving resolution through mediation. District Chairs will negotiate and agree on travel itinerary and arrangements including contact and briefing of natural parents. The Host District Chair will be responsible for arranging safe conduct from host home to International Airport Departures. The sponsor District Chair will be responsible for ensuring the student's reception in sponsor country is safe and appropriate. The joint District Chairs will determine whether an escort is required on the international flight and by whom the cost will be borne. They will also support the student in communicating with their parents during the period prior to departure. District Chair will notify RI in writing that a student is being sent home. Include the name of the student, sending district, date of return, and reason(s) for return.

The counsellor should help the student make departure arrangements and facilitate leave-taking from the host family and school friends and make arrangements to be informed when the student has arrived home safely.

The counsellor should arrange termination of enrolment and request the school notify the appropriate authorities regarding withdrawal of the AASES and to request termination of the student visa.

4.2.5 Saying Goodbye

During the final weeks of an exchange, many students struggle with conflicting emotions about leaving the new friends they've made and returning home. Inbound programmes should work with students to make the transition as smooth as possible. Involve host families. The host family may begin to feel neglected as the student becomes increasingly involved in year-end school activities and social gatherings. Help them anticipate some of the emotions they may experience when it's time for the student to return home.

Co-ordinate end-of-year activities:

- Give inbound students a chance to say goodbye to the people they've met throughout the year. The major Safari is usually in May/June so it may be close to the departure of northern hemisphere students;
- Check the student has no debts owing to host families or elsewhere and advise District Committee to facilitate release of the Emergency Fund;
- Finalise travel arrangements. Work with the student's parents and sponsor district to finalize travel plans. Help the student with packing, shipping, and planning for departure.
- Ensure the club has scheduled a date for the student to present their final presentation that doesn't clash with departure date or district commitments or Safari;
- Arrange a farewell event at club level;
- Arrange to be at the airport for the student's departure to support and facilitate the separation;
- Remind the student to email host family, counsellor, host district country co-ordinator when they have arrived safely home and invite them to stay in touch.

5. Outbound Counsellor

5.1 Outbound Counsellor Roles

Ensure the Club's outbound student counsellor is a person who (if there are two people involved in counselling the following requirements apply to both)

- has a rapport with young people and is committed to the student's well being and happiness through out the exchange but also;
- a person able to ensure, in a non-confrontational manner, that the student and host families are aware of the Rotary rules and the student commits to fulfilling their obligations as an ambassador;
- is of the same gender as the student or alternatively that the counsellor's partner will act in the capacity of counsellor or that another member of the Rotary Club of the same gender as the student will be appointed as an assistant counsellor
- is not the Club President or Youth Exchange Programme chair;
- is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the student is protected and treated kindly and fairly;
- is prepared to undertake the required District training sessions;
- is familiar with and able to implement, if necessary, RI's "Youth Exchange Sexual Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines" Form CL 8.

5.2 Outbound Counsellor Tasks

Outbound counsellors prepare students for the exchange and maintain regular contact

while the student is abroad. Their responsibilities occur in four phases:

- Prior to departure;
- On departure;
- During the exchange
- At the conclusion of the exchange

The tasks may vary but the more important are detailed as follows:

5.2.1 Prior to Departure

- Acquaint him/herself with the rules and guidelines of the Programme, and so be in a position to discuss such matters with the student and their family to provide proper guidance.
- Assist the selected student in completing the requirements in the International Application form and to prepare for the District Interview.
- Be prepared, if required by the District Committee, to accompany the student and the student's parents or guardians to the District Interview.
- Explain to the student and their parents, the expectations of the club and the district;
- Invite the student to several Rotary Club meetings before their departure for overseas and at one of these meetings have the student address the Club. Most Clubs have the student give the introductory talk they will give to their overseas Club.
- Be committed to keep in touch with the student before they depart and assist them as needed with any visa paperwork, and to get to know them well and become a friend.

5.2.2 On departure

- See the student off providing them assistance and encouragement;
- Remind the student to ring their parents when they safely arrive and to email sponsor club counsellor and district country co-ordinator;

5.2.3 During Exchange

- Keep in regular contact with the student while overseas, at least each two months; and on their birthday and on special days such as Christmas;
- Keep in regular contact with the student's parents while overseas, at least each two months;
- Keep the Club informed on what the student is doing and how they are progressing;
- Maintain contact with the student's district outbound coordinator;
- Be familiar with and able to implement if necessary Rotary International's "Youth Exchange Sexual Abuse and Harassment Reporting Guidelines" Form CL8.

5.2.4 Early Return

If an outbound student is designated for early return, the District Youth Exchange Committee Chair will brief the Club President and Counsellor with relevant details and advise time and means of return. The circumstances may be issues well outside the student's control or may be the result of the student's inability to meet the standards of the exchange. In all cases a supportive response is appropriate with emphasis on the positive accomplishments the student will have achieved while recognising the reasons for the decision. Where the return is not family initiated but is due to issues attributable to the student, they will not receive recognition as having completed the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme. District Chair will undertake briefing of the student's parents but the counsellor's assistance in providing support to the family while respecting the decision of the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme will ensure we minimise the negative consequences while maintaining the standards within the programme.

5.2.5 Saying Welcome Home

The counsellor's tasks continue after the student's return:

- Be prepared, if required by the District Committee, to accompany the student and the student's parents or guardians to the District Debrief day following the student's return;
- Personally debrief the student and help with any problems of readjustment after their return;
- Seek the student's input into how the club could improve the exchange process;
- Encourage the student to recruit applicants for future exchanges;
- Invite the student to attend the club and speak on how their exchange has influenced them. Bear in mind many older exchange students may be moving away to University shortly after they return and a club visit may need to be scheduled in consultation with them prior to their return.

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