



CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING PLAIN LANGUAGE GUIDE: ONLINE INTERACTIONS

Authorisation

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Why this guide exists

If you are an adult involved in any Rotary District 9815 program that includes young people, you will at some point communicate with one of them online. This guide is for you. It explains the six rules of the Online Interactions Procedure in plain language, so you know what to do, what not to do, and why it matters.

Rotary District 9815 Child Safety and Wellbeing: Online Interactions Plain Language Guide

This guide is not the authoritative document. The full Online Interactions Procedure is. If anything in this guide is unclear, or if you face a situation it does not cover, read the Procedure or phone the District Youth Protection Officer.

What counts as “online interaction”

Any electronic communication or contact with a young person counts. Video conferencing. Group chat. Direct messaging. Social media. Email. SMS. Voice calls. Online application or registration forms. Anything that happens electronically.

This applies from the moment you first make contact — including any online registration or application process — through to the end of the young person’s involvement in the program.

The six rules, in plain language

Rule 1 — Use Rotary channels, not your personal ones

When you communicate with a young person in connection with a Rotary program, it goes through an approved Rotary channel — an authorised email address, group chat, shared platform, or video conferencing tool. Not your personal email. Not your personal phone. Not your personal social media. Not WhatsApp on your own number.

For email specifically: outbound email to a young person comes from the program’s position address — for a District program, that means addresses like rypen@rotary9815.org.au or muna@rotary9815.org.au. Not your personal Rotary email (for example, barry.rogers@rotary9815.org.au). For a club program, use the program’s position email where one exists, or the club’s general email otherwise.

Why position addresses? They keep working when leadership changes. More than one person can see them. The program’s records all sit in one place. If you leave the program tomorrow, the next person can pick up where you left off without losing anything.

If a young person emails your personal Rotary address (because they saw it somewhere old), reply from the program’s position address and ask them to use that one going forward. Make sure flyers, information packs, and registration confirmations all carry the position address — not yours.

Rule 2 — Two screened adults on every video or voice call

Every video or voice call involving a young person has at least two screened adults from the Rotary side, at all times. In a program with named roles — Facilitators at RYPEN, Mentors in a mentoring program — both adults on the call are drawn from those roles.

If a brief one-on-one call is genuinely unavoidable (for example, a quick wellbeing check-in), it can happen with two safeguards: the call is recorded with parent or guardian permission, and a second screened adult is told in advance and on standby. Unscheduled one-on-one video or voice calls are not allowed.

Rule 3 — Consents (Consent 1 and Consent 2)

Two consents matter:

Consent 1 — Participation. A parent or guardian consents to the young person taking part in the program, including the online elements. Without that consent, the young person does not participate.

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Consent 2 — Images and stories. A parent or guardian consents to the use of the young person's image, video, voice, or story in any Rotary materials — flyers, social media posts, newsletters, websites. Without that consent, their image and story stay out of those materials.

The two consents are separate. A family might agree to participation but not to images, or vice versa. Respect what they choose.

Rule 4 — No private one-to-one online channels

Private one-to-one online communication with a young person is not permitted, ever. That covers message-board direct messages, video conference private chats, breakout rooms with just one adult and one young person, social media direct messages, SMS, personal phone calls — and any other channel with the same effect.

If you find yourself in a one-to-one online situation that was not planned, copy a second screened adult onto the thread immediately, or break off and re-open it through an approved Rotary channel with a second screened adult present.

Rule 5 — Conduct online is the same as conduct in person

The standard of conduct that applies in person also applies online. While a young person is involved in the program, and until they turn 18, the rules apply. For Rotaract members aged 18 and over, the rules apply for as long as the Rotary relationship continues.

That means: no comments on a young person's personal appearance. No private contact about anything not related to the program. No sharing your personal life or theirs beyond what the program calls for. No content (images, language, jokes) that you would not be comfortable having read out at a District meeting.

Rule 6 — No live AI agents talking to young people

Live AI agents — chatbots, AI personas, automated conversation systems — do not interact directly with young people in any program. If the program team uses AI tools to prepare materials (slides, summaries, captions, translations), a screened adult reviews everything before it goes to young people, and the use of AI is noted in the program records.

If something goes wrong

If something concerning happens online — a young person discloses something, you observe something that worries you, you suspect an adult is breaching one of these rules, or you make a mistake yourself — phone the right officer. At a District program, that is the DYPO. At a club program, the Club President or the CYPO. If unsure, the DYPO.

For the full response procedure, see the Responding and Reporting Procedure.

What this guide is not

This is a plain-language guide. The authoritative document is the Online Interactions Procedure. If the two ever appear to say different things, the Procedure wins. Phone the DYPO if you are not sure.