

# Ruritan Adopts Policy for Working With Youth

At its March meeting the Ruritan National Board of Directors approved this "Child Abuse and Protection Policy" for all Ruritans who work with young people.

## Justification

One mission of Ruritan is to create a supportive learning environment for youth. An environment that enables them to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent and caring citizens. The Youth Protection Policy represents a code of ethics, which all Ruritans are expected to observe. Its purpose is to protect the safety and well being of all youth, whether participants in Ruritan sponsored functions, or club members and adult Ruritan club members.

All Ruritans who work closely with youth, defined in this document as anyone under 18 years of age, have the potential to profoundly affect the well being of the youth with whom they come in contact. In addition to providing safe and appropriate environments, Ruritans must also be positive role models focusing on how they communicate with youth, their methods of discipline and problem solving, and how sensitive they are to the individual needs of all young people. The responsibility for the well being of these youth lies with each and every one of us. The Ruritan National Youth Protection policy is designed to help Ruritan Clubs conduct safe and successful community service activities aimed at our youth.

This policy provides an opportunity for all clubs adults working in Ruritan youth programs to:

- § Protect youth and all program participants.
- § Detect and change situations that may be harmful.
- § Reaffirm their dedication to youth and their well being.
- § Establish and follow policies that create safe environments for all youth program participants

## Policy

Ruritan members will endeavor to provide safe and healthy programs for youth. In cases of illness or injury, youth will be treated on site by an appropriate health care provider or taken to an appropriate health care provider if necessary, when a parent or guardian is not available for consultation.

Ruritan members are encouraged to avoid, where

possible, being alone with a single youth, including transporting non-related youth and sharing sleeping quarters with non-related youth. Written permission of parent/guardian should be obtained in the event it is unavoidable.

When Ruritan sponsored activities require overnight housing, supervision should be provided by club members or counselors in a nearby room.

Ruritan members under any circumstances, may not discipline youth by the use of physical punishment or by failure to provide the basic necessities of care, such as food or shelter.

Ruritan members working directly with youth will be provided training and information about identifying signs of possible child abuse. Staff training will include approved procedures for responding to the suspi-

cion of child abuse. Ruritan National will provide training materials.

Ruritan members should be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children each time they report for a program. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse should be reported to the appropriate local agency.

Parents will be informed about their youth's participation in a Ruritan activity and invited to visit the activity at any time.

Before taking pictures of youth, members should have a completed photo release form for each youth. Please respect the families that do not wish to have their youth photographed.

Even with a signed release form, do not put photos of youth on web pages that identify the names or locations of the youth.

## Summary

One-on-one situations of an adult with a child should be avoided as reasonably feasible. Avoid potential child abuse issues by having at least three people present at all times. The purpose is to provide a safe and caring environment in all aspects of the Ruritan program, and to protect members from situations where there is potential for being accused of abuse. It is recognized that there will be occasions where one-on-one situations are unavoidable. All Ruritans, should, whenever possible, avoid such situations with youth.

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