

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

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 applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors and anyone involved in activities or programs organized by Ruritan and its districts, areas, zones, and clubs.

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 wellbeing.
- 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. No child under 18 can be treated without the written consent from a parent or guardian.
- Ruritan members shall avoid being alone with a single youth, including transporting non-related youth and sharing sleeping quarters with non-related youth.
- When Ruritan sponsored activities require over-night housing, supervision shall be provided by club members or counselors in a nearby room. Adults supervising over-night activities should undergo a thorough background check before the event.
- In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.
- Private online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, etc.) must include another adult or parent.

- Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) must include another adult or parent.
- Ruritan members under any circumstances, may not discipline youth using physical punishment, abusive language, 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 suspicion 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 shall be reported to the appropriate local agency.

Definitions:

- Child Abuse: Any form of physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or neglect that causes harm to a child. Ruritan members must abide by federal and state laws as mandated reporters.
 - Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury to a child.
 - Emotional Abuse: Any attitude or behavior which interferes with a child's mental health or social development.
 - Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act between an adult and a child or between children where one exerts power over the other.
 - Neglect: Failure to provide for a child's basic needs.
- 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 shall 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 or social media that identify the names or locations of the youth.