

Rotary Youth Exchange Update 18 June 2020

After carefully considering all options and information from the health authorities in BC and Washington, our partner school districts and our exchange partners in Rotary, we have made the difficult decision to cancel all Rotary youth exchanges in District 5020 for 2020/21.

Why?

Rotary International Youth Exchange has strongly encouraged all Districts to voluntarily suspend long-term Rotary Youth Exchange in the 2020-21 Rotary year.

Many schools in Washington state have already said that they will not accept international students for 2020/21 and the forecast is uncertain for remaining school districts in BC and Washington.

In order to try and minimize the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus many countries have imposed restrictions to travel, suspended the issuance of visas and have blocked foreigners from entering their countries.

Program Eligibility

We realize that for some of you this will mean the end of your Rotary Youth Exchange dream. It is important to understand that most countries and school districts will not permit students who have already graduated from high school to participate in a high school exchange program. If you were born before Sept 30, 2003 you will not be able to participate in the program in 2021/22. Students who still meet the eligibility requirements for departures in 2021/22 that still wish to go on exchange may do so without having to reapply. We encourage you to speak with your country officer to confirm whether you can stay with the program.

Applying next year

We plan to open for new applications for 2021/22 in late 2020/early 2021. However, the outlook is still uncertain and there are many conditions that have to be met before we can confidently proceed with exchanges: even as far in the future as 2021/22. We hate to disappoint you and we understand that you may have other views on this. From our perspective this is the right thing to do now. We count on your understanding as we prepare to relaunch exchanges in 2021/22.

If you were scheduled to depart this summer and plan to continue with exchange you don't have to requalify and go through interviews again, but we will ask you for updated supplementary documents (e.g. medical and dental reports and school transcripts). We will follow up with details and reopen your application by the end of the summer.

Fees

Over the next few weeks your country officer will be in contact with you to discuss your future exchange plans. If you are still eligible to go in 2021/22 it is important to tell them if you have decided not to go on

exchange. We will also be processing refunds for the portion of your commitment fee that was allotted to the Orientation and Rebound events and insurance. It will take a few weeks to get everything worked out but we will be in contact regarding the return of the unused portion of the fees that you have paid.

The pandemic has turned everyone's lives upside down and we are all very disappointed that we have to fully cancel the program for 2020/21. You have all spent a lot of time preparing and working on setting up your exchange year.

Next Steps

If you will be unable to continue with your exchange plans because of age limitations our program Chair, Mike Cloutier has already been in contact with you. We encourage all students to speak with their country officer over the next few days and discuss your future exchange plans.

We will continue to look for opportunities for short term exchanges with select country partners and will keep everyone informed next year as we know more about what we can do to keep these important peace building programs going.

Over the coming weeks and months we will stay in touch as we develop plans for future training and orientation events for students who are continuing with the program.