



Information regarding sexual abuse toward young people

For help call 1.800.424.3691 or from abroad 240.235.2100

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse can include different kinds of activities such as:

- becoming the object of persistent suggestive looks, comment, jokes or other harassing behaviors.
- being made to kiss someone;
- touching private parts of the body;
- being made to engage in unwanted sex or sexual acts;
- being made to look at pornographic videos or magazines;
- other behaviors that make you uncomfortable and continue after you've asked that they stop.

Perpetrator Strategies

- **Intensifying the relationship:** The relationship is intensified in order to establish a supposed equality between the perpetrator and the victim. For example the perpetrator may begin by sharing confidences or marriage problems, allowing the victim to break YFU or family rules or becoming jealous of other relationships.
- **Isolation:** Friendship with other young people or contact with YFU and the student's natural family is prevented in order to deliberately establish isolation.
- **Seduction:** Emotional devotion, tenderness, gift-giving, recognition or simulated love could be fostered or intensified.
- **Ignoring the victim's resistance:** The perpetrator's inner-conflict is ignored, thus your clear feelings of discomfort may go disregarded.
- **Keeping the victim silent:** The intense relationship is used to impose a sense of responsibility and guilt in order to keep the victim quiet. This can happen through threats to report rule breaking or to get the student sent home early.

Sexual abuse rarely occurs during a student's exchange year. However, we wish to inform you about how to recognize sexual abuse so you do not become a victim.

While on exchange, it can be hard to understand different family and cultural behaviors. And while sharing affection is one of the nicest things in the world, it is possible that someone will show you affection that makes you uncomfortable.

If you feel uncomfortable due to attention you're receiving, physical or otherwise, tell that person to stop! If the behavior doesn't stop you do not have to tolerate it! Tell your YFU rep, YFU national office staff or YFU USA staff what you are feeling. It is never too late to let someone know.

Your body belongs to you!

- Your body is your business! - You have the right to determine your body's boundaries.
- Trust your feelings! - You should take your feelings seriously!
- Listen to your intuition and follow your best judgment.
- You decide who can touch you! - You have the right to decide how, when, where and by whom you want to be touched.
- You have the right to say NO! - It's always OK to say NO.
- Keeping secrets – good or bad?
- You decide whether to share or keep secrets. It is never wrong to tell a trusted adult if you are feeling uncomfortable and you should not fear the consequences of talking about your discomfort.
- Talk about things and ask for help! - You decide when and with whom to talk about sexual misconduct that you have experienced. There is always an adult at YFU who can help you.
- You may also choose to talk with a teacher, school counselor, friend or a friend's parent.
- It's not your fault! - The adult or abuser is the one responsible. It is never your fault.

Where to find help

In your host country:

There are YFU volunteers and staff in your host country who are trained to help you. You can find their contact information in the appendix of your The Guide handbook. You can also reach a YFU USA support staff member in the USA, 24-hours a day by calling **240.235.2100** (dial direct or call collect).

In the United States:

You and your parents can call a 24-hour line to reach a YFU USA support staff member: **1.800.424.3691**.

Important:

In most countries it is mandatory to report sexual abuse to the authorities. This means that if a person finds out about an act of sexual abuse, he/she is obligated by law to report it.

Adapted from Youth For Understanding Germany by Youth For Understanding USA, Inc.