



SERVING 19 DISTRICTS IN ILLINOIS, INDIANA, IOWA, MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA,
NEBRASKA, NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA, WISCONSIN AND ONTARIO, CANADA
5580, 5610, 6220, 6250, 6270, 6290, 6310, 6330, 6360, 6400, 6420, 6440, 6450, 6460, 6490, 6510, 6540, 6560, 6580

March 15, 2020

Central States Rotary Youth Exchange (CSRYE) would like to assure our students, parents, host families, and partners that our primary and most important task is to protect the health and safety of all our students! Thankfully, at this time we have no reports of infected students.

Rotary International, CSRYE and our member Districts continue to monitor the ongoing global outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) closely, and assess the impact this dynamic and uncertain situation may have on participants and families. This is uncharted territory for all of us, but your child's safety is our highest priority. Nothing is more important to us than the safety and well-being of our youth.

We continue to monitor the World Health Organization (WHO)

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>

and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/> for updates. Additionally, we have contacted various doctors and health officials in our member Districts for advice.

At this time, we believe the best course of action is to stay where you are and not travel.

Johns Hopkins University and Medicine <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> has indicated that COVID-19 has spread to at least 142 countries. According to many of the officials we have spoken with, travel may exponentially increase your risk of being infected. We are encouraging all students to follow the guidelines for prevention by avoiding large groups, washing hands frequently, and to follow all other recommendations.

In the United States and Canada, most schools, public gatherings, sporting events, concerts, and others have been cancelled or postponed. Closings continue to increase each day in order to help prevent the spread of the virus. Most schools have implemented eLearning days, and many businesses are encouraging employees to work at home. CSRYE has cancelled or postponed travel where possible to ensure student safety.

Correspondents are in daily contact with their partners to monitor and assess the situation in countries where outbound students reside. In many cases, they receive daily updates from their partner countries.



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Our position is that natural parents have the final decision as to whether a student stays or returns home. We are **STRONGLY** encouraging parents to make informed decisions by talking with doctors and health officials before a student is returned home. Avoid the media hype and make decisions based upon sound medical advice. Students that wish to return home should contact their sponsor District Chair or Outbound Coordinator, as well as host YEO for the necessary steps. Returns will be facilitated as quickly as possible. If your student does return home, please follow the CDC's guidance for travelers.

CSRYE does not have all the answers, but we will continue to monitor the situation and adjust as necessary. This is an ever-changing situation like no other. Rotary has a strong network of volunteers that work tirelessly to provide the best care for our students. From the beginning, we have done our best to protect and care for every student as if it he/she was our own child. In the days ahead, we will act with even more diligence as we all face the changing environment around the world.

Yours in Rotary Youth Exchange,

Brent Sheppard, Chair
Central States Rotary Youth Exchange