Boy Scouts of America - Youth Protection Program

The Boy Scouts of America places the greatest importance on creating the most secure environment possible for our youth members. To maintain such an environment, the BSA developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies and provides parents and leaders with resources for the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Venturing programs.

Leadership Selection

The Boy Scouts of America takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our youth members call for high-quality adult leaders. We work closely with our chartered organizations to help recruit the best possible leaders for their units.

The adult application requests background information that should be checked by the unit committee or the chartered organization before accepting an applicant for unit leadership. While no current screening techniques exist that can identify every potential child molester, we can reduce the risk of accepting a child molester by learning all we can about an applicant for a leadership position—his or her experience with children, why he or she wants to be a Scout leader, and what discipline techniques he or she would use.

Required Training

- Youth Protection training is required for all BSA registered volunteers.
- Youth Protection training must be taken every two years. If a volunteer’s Youth Protection training record is not current at the time of recharter, the volunteer will not be reregistered.

Youth Protection Reporting Procedures for Volunteers

There are two types of Youth Protection–related reporting procedures all volunteers must follow:

- When you witness or suspect any child has been abused or neglected—See "Mandatory Report of Child Abuse" below.
- When you witness a violation of the BSA’s Youth Protection policies—See "Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies" below.

Mandatory Report of Child Abuse

All persons involved in Scouting shall report to local authorities any good-faith suspicion or belief that any child is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation, including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material. You may not abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.

Steps to Reporting Child Abuse

1. Ensure the child is in a safe environment.
2. In cases of child abuse or medical emergencies, call 911 immediately. In addition, if the suspected abuse is in the Scout's home or family, you are required to contact the local child abuse hotline.
3. Notify the Scout executive or his/her designee.

Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies

If you think any of the BSA's Youth Protection policies have been violated, including those described within Scouting's Barriers to Abuse, you must notify your local council Scout executive or his/her designee so appropriate action can be taken for the safety of our Scouts.
Scouting's Barriers to Abuse

The BSA has adopted the following policies for the safety and well-being of its members. While these policies are primarily for the protection of youth members, they also serve to protect adult leaders. Refer to the Guide to Safe Scouting, contact your local council, or email youth.protection@scouting.org for more information.

✦ Minimum two-deep leadership on all outings required. Two registered adult leaders, or one registered leader and a parent of a participating Scout or other adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required for all trips and outings. Appropriate adult leadership must be present for all overnight Scouting activities; coed overnight activities—even those including parent and child—require male and female adult leaders, both of whom must be 21 years of age or older, and one of whom must be a registered member of the BSA.

✦ One-on-one contact between adults and youth members prohibited. In any situation requiring a personal meeting, such as a Scoutmaster’s conference, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths.

✦ Separate accommodations for adults and Scouts required. When camping, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian. Councils are strongly encouraged to have separate shower and latrine facilities for females. When separate facilities are not available, separate male and female shower times should be scheduled and posted. Likewise, youth and adults must shower at different times.

✦ Privacy of youth respected. Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

✦ Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices prohibited. While most campers and leaders use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade the privacy of individuals. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants.

✦ No secret organizations. The Boy Scouts of America does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program. All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders.

✦ No hazing. Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any Scouting activity.

✦ No bullying. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited in Scouting.

✦ Youth leadership monitored by adult leaders. Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by youth leaders and ensure that BSA policies are followed.

✦ Discipline must be constructive. Discipline used in Scouting should be constructive and reflect Scouting’s values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

✦ Appropriate attire for all activities. Proper clothing for activities is required. For example, skinny-dipping or revealing bathing suits are not appropriate in Scouting.

✦ Members are responsible to act according to Scout Oath and Law. All members of the Boy Scouts of America are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Physical violence, theft, verbal insults, drugs, and alcohol have no place in the Scouting program and may result in the revocation of a Scout's membership.

✦ Units are responsible to enforce Youth Protection Policies. The head of the chartered organization or chartered organization representative and the local council must approve the registration of the unit's adult leader. Adult leaders of Scouting units are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth members and interceding when necessary. The parents of youth members who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance.

✦ Mandatory reporting of child abuse. All involved in Scouting are personally responsible to immediately report to law enforcement any belief or good faith suspicion that any child is or has been abused or exploited or endangered in any way. No person may abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.

✦ Social media guidelines. The policy of two-deep leadership extends into cyberspace. Another adult leader should be copied on any electronic communication between adult and youth member.

Violations of any BSA’s Youth Protection policies must immediately be reported to the Scout executive.