

# 11—YOUTH PROTECTION



**The personal safety of all youth is of paramount importance to the Boy Scouts of America.** Child abuse and neglect, whether in Scouting or in the community at large, affect everyone. The BSA focuses on protecting youth through the implementation of comprehensive prevention policies, early detection of child abusers, and meaningful intervention to stop abuse and assist victims. The BSA reminds us that Youth Protection Begins With You™. As a commissioner, you have a vital responsibility to implement and communicate the BSA's Youth Protection policies.

It was once believed that child molesters were dirty old men or strangers. Now we know that 90 percent of sexual abusers of youth are persons known to the child—and may be known to you. The molester may be another youth, an older sibling, a parent, or another close relative. He or she may be an adult in a position of trust in the community, in a religious organization, at school, or even in Scouting. By manipulating their position of supervision and trust, these individuals use fear, shame, embarrassment, and confusion surrounding normal or “secretive” activities with the youth.

Parents play a critical role in the protection of their children from abuse. As a commissioner, you are in a leadership position to help units by encouraging parental participation in all Scouting activities. Every Scout leader should encourage parents to know their child's unit leadership, join in planning unit activities, and become acquainted with other parents and their children. In addition, all parents should be strongly encouraged to complete Youth Protection training either online or by participating in a council training course.

Child abuse might be physical, mental, sexual, or neglect. Typically, when a child is abused, the incident has some elements of several of these types of abuse. When a child has been abused, adults' reactions must be supportive and understanding; this is critical for the child's overall well-being. There is a good chance the adult might know the alleged abuser, so typical reactions can include outrage, fear, and disbelief—none of these are helpful to the child or to the situation. Children are best served when adults respond with concern, involvement, and action.

## BSA Mandatory Reporting Policy on Child Abuse

Whether youth come into our programs from abusive households, are bullied in school, are exposed to explicit material in their community or online, or are sexually abused, even in Scouting, we must take **immediate action**. You and the person bringing a suspected incident to your attention must immediately report to the 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, or 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 and the person reporting **must** report the information immediately to the authorities for investigation. The BSA's mandatory reporting policy on child abuse is clear—No person may abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.

## **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. No person may abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.*

*Notify your Scout executive of this report, or of any violation of BSA's Youth Protection policies, so that he or she may take appropriate action for the safety of our Scouts, make appropriate notifications, and follow-up with investigating agencies.*

Notify your Scout executive of any violation of BSA's Youth Protection policies so that he or she may take appropriate action for the safety of our Scouts, make appropriate notifications, and follow up with investigating agencies. Disclosure by a Scout that he is being abused at home requires an additional report to state protective and regulatory services (CPS). It is essential that the Scout executive or designee is notified to ensure the safety of other Scouts and to coordinate any necessary investigative follow-up.

## **Scouting's Barriers to Abuse**

The BSA has adopted the following policies for the safety and well-being of its members. These policies are primarily for the protection of its youth members; however, they also serve to protect adult leaders.

**Two-deep leadership is required on all outings.** 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. There are a few instances, such as patrol activities, when the presence of adult leaders is not required and adult leadership may be limited to training and guidance of the patrol leadership. With the proper training, guidance, and approval by the troop leaders, the patrol can conduct day hikes and service projects. 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. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.

**One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is prohibited.** In situations that require personal conferences, 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 are 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 times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. Likewise, youth and adults must shower at different times.

**Privacy of youth is 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 is 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 is 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 the Scout Oath and Scout 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. Parents of youth members who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance. *Any violations of the BSA's Youth Protection policies must immediately be reported to the Scout executive.*

## Youth Protection and the Commissioner

As a commissioner, you should make yourself familiar with and properly apply the BSA's policies to protect members from abuse while participating in BSA activities. Along with other information about the risks of abuse and effective prevention, the most current versions of Scouting's Barriers to Abuse and the Mandatory Report of Child Abuse policy are posted on the BSA's Youth Protection website: <http://www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection.aspx>. You are strongly encouraged to visit the site frequently for the latest information about the BSA's Youth Protection resources.

Commissioners play a vital leadership role in protecting Scouts from abuse:

1. Monitor the status of Youth Protection–trained leaders in the units you serve. Remember, registered adult leaders have a limited time to complete Youth Protection training after they submit their registration. The training must be renewed every two years, and current Youth Protection training is required for adults who are included on the roster for unit rechartering.
2. At least once a year, explain and promote the latest Youth Protection training resources for adult leaders in every unit you serve. Include this discussion as part of your November visit at a unit committee meeting.
3. Encourage unit participation in Youth Protection month each April.
4. Help units and their chartered organizations follow the BSA's leader-selection procedures and conduct face-to-face interviews, check references, and submit the registration application for background checks before permitting direct contact with youth members.
5. Inform unit leaders about their reporting responsibilities if there is an allegation, suspicion, or observation of child abuse or a violation of the BSA's Youth Protection policies.
6. Promote units' use of the videos designed to protect youth from sexual abuse: *It Happened to Me* for Cub Scouts, *A Time to Tell* for Boy Scouts, and *Personal Safety Awareness* for older Boy Scouts and Venturers. Online safety training for youth and information for parents and volunteers is available through the BSA's official online safety partner, [netsmartz.org](http://netsmartz.org), which is sponsored by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
7. Explain to unit adult leaders how a boy and his parents use the inserts in the front of the youth handbooks and the importance of including a review of this material during the Scoutmaster conference when a boy joins the troop.
8. Consult with your council. Talk with your district commissioner or district executive to find out about the latest BSA resources on the prevention of child abuse.