



Revisions to the Sea Scout Manual

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True youth protection can be achieved only through the focused commitment of everyone in Scouting. It is the mission of Youth Protection volunteers and professionals to work within the Boy Scouts of America to maintain a culture of Youth Protection awareness and safety at the national, regional, area, council, district, and unit levels.

In addition to training for volunteers and professionals, it is important for our youth to learn how to protect and take care of themselves. The document Personal Safety Awareness will appear as a preface in the next printed version of the Sea Scout Manual.

It is also important for parents to understand the BSA's barriers to abuse and how to talk to their children about this difficult subject. The BSA has prepared a pamphlet, How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide. The pamphlet will be included in the next printing of the Sea Scout Manual, as well. Until that time, please make sure the parents in your unit have access to this document.

>> PERSONAL SAFETY AWARENESS

From the 2019 Printing of the Scouts, BSA Manual



When you were younger, the responsibility for keeping you safe fell solely on your parents and other caregivers. They made sure there was nothing around that could harm you, and they rarely let you out of their sight.

Things are different now. As you move closer to becoming an adult, more and more people share responsibility for keeping you safe, including your Scout leaders, coaches, teachers, and other caring adults. Some of the responsibility falls on you, too, because there are times when no caring adults are around to protect you. As you become a leader, you also take on some responsibility for the other Scouts in your patrol and troop and for helping them learn how to protect and take care of themselves. This is called *personal safety awareness*.



Keeping safe is everyone's responsibility.



ADVANCEMENT: PERSONAL SAFETY

Scouting can teach you much about being safe—and not just when you're building fires, using woods tools, or steering canoes through rapids. It can teach you to protect yourself from child abuse, from bullying, and from the dangers you can encounter on the internet. Along your trail to Eagle, you will learn about keeping yourself safe in all these situations and more.



SCOUT With your parent or guardian, complete the exercises in the pamphlet *How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide*. Earn the Cyber Chip for your grade.



TENDERFOOT Explain the importance of keeping yourself safe using the buddy system on outings and in your neighborhood and demonstrate the buddy system by using it on a troop or patrol outing.



SECOND CLASS Explain the three R's of personal safety and protection. Describe what a bully is and what an appropriate response would be to someone who is bullying you or someone else.



BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves including personal (body), emotional (feelings) and property (possessions). A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they feel their boundaries are being violated. It is an understanding between you and others of reasonable, safe, and permissible ways to interact with each other.

Personal

Imagine a safety circle around your body like a Hula-Hoop. No person—adult or youth—should enter this circle without your consent, especially when it's done to abuse, bully, or harass you in any way. Examples of appropriate physical contact by adult and youth include handshakes, high-fives, pats on the back, and fist bumps. Inappropriate forms of physical contact include grabbing, tickling, or wrestling, and any type of physical assault such as punching or choking. Any contact with private areas of the body is off-limits for obvious reasons. All of these boundaries apply especially when showering or sleeping, and in bathrooms or any other place where privacy is expected.

Feelings/Emotions

All emotions should be respected. Everyone can have a bad day. You may not know what is going on in another's life. They may be experiencing abuse, violence, death of a family member, or emotional problems in their home or community. Calling someone names, berating them, ignoring them, being rude in person or online, or manipulating others violates the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Property/Possessions

Camp or program property and personal possessions are always to be respected and not touched, used, or borrowed without permission from the owner. Stealing or damaging someone's property may lead to disciplinary action and may also be a criminal offense.

Healthy/Acceptable Boundaries

- Ability to say “no” without consequence
- Asking for what you want or need
- Saying “yes” because you consent without obligation to please others
- Having your personal rules and property respected
- Support from others and for others

Think about your personal boundaries. How should you respond when these boundaries are not being respected?

Trusted Adults

A trusted adult is a parent, teacher, counselor, religious leader, or other adult—approved and agreed upon by your parents—with whom you can talk if you are in trouble. It's a good idea to keep a list of five trusted adults so that you have several people you can turn to in different situations or if one of them is unavailable or actually part of the problem. If your parents or guardians have given you the responsibility of taking care of yourself when they are away from home, discuss with them what they expect of you when you are on your own.

An important step can be making a list of contact numbers and keeping it near a telephone or in your mobile phone. Having these numbers handy will give you plenty of trusted adults you can call if you have questions or need help.

Emergency Contacts

Use this example to start your own list of important telephone numbers. Keep the list in a safe, convenient place near the telephone, and program the numbers into your mobile phone, too.

Emergency response: _____

Parent or guardian at work: _____

Parent's or guardian's mobile phone: _____

Nearest relative: _____

Trusted adult (leader, neighbor, family friend): _____

Scout leader: _____

Religious leader: _____

Council: _____

Scout executive: _____

If you feel that a trusted adult doesn't believe you or is not helping, keep talking to them or tell another trusted adult until you get the help you need to feel safe. Remember, you can also call your council Scout executive or the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-726-8871.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The majority of adults want only what is best for you. Some adults and youth, however, engage in abuse and neglect. In fact, police departments and social-service agencies receive more than 3 million reports of child abuse each year.

Abuse happens when a child or older youth is harmed or threatened with harm by a person responsible for that child's or youth's care.

Neglect happens when a person responsible for the care of a child or youth fails to provide for their needs. Abuse and neglect affect people from infancy through their teenage years.

SEXUAL ABUSE

When an adult or older youth uses their authority to involve you in any type of sexual activity, it is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with persons using force, making threats, or taking advantage of you with or without your consent. Anyone can be an abuser. It can be a brother, sister, teacher, neighbor, leader, or another youth who takes advantage of you or someone you know. Sexual abuse can also occur when an adult or youth crosses your clear personal boundaries through inappropriate communication or by exposing you

to alcohol, drugs, or pornography. You can be at risk of being sexually abused anywhere there is access or opportunity, such as at home; at a neighbor's house; at school, field trips, and public events; and even in Scouting.

You have the right to respond to anyone who does something that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe by saying “NO” and telling them to stop. You can also get away from them. Tell a leader, trusted adult, or parent what happened. Sometimes our bodies freeze as a natural response in a dangerous situation or when someone is doing something that feels wrong. Even if you aren't able to stop it from happening or yell “no” in the moment, that's OK. You can still respond later by following up with a parent or trusted adult. Remember, it is not your fault.

If you have concerns about yourself or others experiencing any type of sexual abuse, help is available. Contact your trusted adult. If an adult you have trusted is an abuser, speak to another adult or the Scout executive, call 911, or call the Scouts First Helpline (1-844-726-8871).

Sexual Abuse by Adults

All youth are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Adults who abuse may manipulate, bribe, coerce, threaten, or force you or others into feeling like a partner in the sexual activity. They most often use a multistep “grooming” process that focuses on your needs and possibly on your parents' needs as well. Adults who intend to sexually harm you may ask to spend a lot of time alone with you to create a special relationship. They may offer overnight trips, special outings, money, and other inappropriate gifts including alcohol and pornography. An abuser usually seeks out a youth who craves affection or attention and makes them feel special.

Once the potential abuser has identified you as a target, the grooming process usually moves to what looks like harmless touching—such as hugging and massages—or exposure of private areas.

You may feel trapped, overwhelmed, or ashamed, and afraid to tell. You may find it difficult to immediately report or disclose the abuse because of fear or love of the individual abusing you. Know that there are trusted and caring adults available who will understand and help you.

Grooming Behaviors

You may not realize you are being groomed until it is too late. A potential abuser may do any of the following:

- Work to become a close friend of your family
- Make himself or herself overly accessible to your family
- Manipulate you with gifts and favors

- Encourage you to keep secrets
- Befriend you through interests such as video games or sports activities
- Ask you to model for photos or videos, or expose you to pornography, drugs, or alcohol
- Engage in progressive, invasive touching such as hugs, back rubs, neck massages, wrestling, etc.
- Seek opportunities to be undressed or shower with you
- Engage you playing sexually themed games
- Manipulate you through their position of authority
- Manipulate your need for love, attention, recognition, and affection

These and other behaviors can be very confusing. To keep you or others silent, the abuser will try to convince you that you are equally responsible for what occurred and that you will get in trouble if you tell. Even if you have engaged in any of the above and you are scared or ashamed, or you care about the person, the person has threatened you, it is not your fault. Remember that no youth or adult can require you or others to do anything inappropriate in exchange for participating in the Scouting program, receiving an award, or earning an advancement. If you think you are being groomed or abused, talk to a trusted adult immediately. This can be hard to do, but remember that a Scout is brave.

Sexual Abuse by Other Youth

It is also possible for a youth of similar age or older to abuse you through force, position of authority, or manipulation. Anytime you find yourself in a game, club initiation, or other situation that starts to involve sexual activity, be aware that this is a form of sexual abuse and should be addressed and reported immediately. Overnight activities such as sleepovers and campouts—or places where privacy is expected, including latrines, bathrooms, showering facilities, etc.—pose a greater risk. Make sure that you use the buddy system and have a clear understanding of your personal boundaries and the personal boundaries of others.

Your overall safety and the safety of other Scouts is of the highest importance to the Boy Scouts of America. If you have any concerns about your safety, the safety of others, or the actions of leaders or parents, you should speak to your trusted adult, parent, teacher, or local council Scout executive immediately.

In an emergency, call 911. The BSA also provides the 24-hour Scouts First Helpline: 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any deliberate injury done to you by a person responsible for your care or a person of authority. Physical abuse injuries can include bruises, broken bones, burns, and scrapes.

Neglect

Neglect often involves depriving you of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or other necessities of life. Neglect can also involve exposing you to harmful substances or materials, such as drugs, alcohol, or pornography, or to harmful practices such as violent behavior. If you or someone you know is experiencing neglect, please speak with a trusted adult.



Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when you are continually ridiculed, blamed, humiliated, or compared unfavorably with others by an adult or peer.

Emotional abuse can occur when someone is completely ignored or rejected, or is frequently threatened with violence. Emotional abuse damages self-esteem and is just as harmful as other forms of abuse.

Violence in the Home

You or others may grow up in a home or neighborhood where yelling, hitting, fighting, and other forms of violence occur—often daily. To someone living in this environment, it may even begin to seem like the normal way to treat other people. Every family has arguments, but when the yelling goes too far and someone gets hurt, or if you live in constant fear in your home or environment, you need to seek help from a trusted adult.

Teen Sexting

Sexting is sending or receiving nude pictures or videos of yourself or others to another person digitally. While it may seem like innocent fun between friends, you need to realize several things:

- It is against the law.
- No image is permanently deleted. Once uploaded, even if immediately deleted, the image(s) can be captured and will continue to exist in cyberspace.
- The images can be used by friends, enemies, or cyber predators to embarrass or shame you or for extortion of money or sexual favors.

This is serious. If you have sent pictures of yourself or received pictures of others, help and support are available.

Reporting youth protection violations and abuse to leaders, trusted adults, or parents gives them the opportunity to stop the abuse, and to protect and support you.

SCOUTING'S BARRIERS TO ABUSE

Our goal in the BSA is to create and maintain a safe environment so that all can benefit from the program. The greatest positive step that we can take together is to ensure that everyone understands and follows the BSA Youth Protection policy and procedures. The Youth Protection program includes policies and training courses designed to keep Scouts safe from abuse. Your parents and other adults are encouraged to take the training, especially before participating in any Scouting activity. All adults registered as members of the BSA must complete Youth Protection training at least every two years and adhere to the Scouter Code of Conduct in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.



Take responsibility. Adult leaders and youth members share the responsibility for the safety of all participants in the program, including following youth protection and health and safety policies. Although adult leaders are responsible for monitoring behavior and intervening when necessary, it's also your responsibility to help ensure that everyone participating in Scouting activities abides by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Physical violence, sexual activity, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, unauthorized weapons, hazing, discrimination, harassment, initiation rites, bullying, cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in the Scouting program and may result in loss of membership.

Use the buddy system. Scouting's buddy system is a good example of how Scouts can look out for each other. It ensures your buddy's safety during activities and your safety by making sure you are never alone and vulnerable.

The buddy system works by pairing Scouts who are about the same age and who have about the same experience level. (If an odd number of Scouts are on an outing, one of the buddy teams may include three Scouts.) You should always know where your buddy is, and never leave the group without your buddy, including going to the latrine, the trading post, or anywhere at night. And be a buddy to others; if you see, suspect, or hear that another youth is experiencing abuse, be brave and tell a trusted adult.

For adult leaders, the buddy system is referred to as "two-deep leadership." This means that two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings. There must be a registered female adult leader 21 years of age and over in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader 21 years of age and over must be present for any activity involving female youth. Program supervision must always be provided.

Any communication between you and an adult leader without another registered adult leader or parent included is prohibited. This applies whether you are face-

to-face with the adult, texting, emailing, instant-messaging, or chatting on social media. In situations requiring a personal conference between you and an adult leader, the meeting is to be done with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.

Use words and actions that are positive. This means that even disciplinary actions must reflect the values of Scouting. All forms of corporal (physical) punishment are prohibited including isolation, humiliation, or ridiculing. All forms of bullying and harassment including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying are also prohibited and not in agreement with the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Tent accommodations. During all activities, separate accommodations are required for males and females, whether youth or adult. When tenting, separate arrangements must be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. The rule that requires youth in buddy assignments to be no more than two years apart in age also applies to tenting. Unlike Cub Scouts, youth in Scouts BSA are not allowed to share a tent with their family.

Lodging/cabin accommodations. Whenever possible, separate cabins or lodging should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. Where separate accommodations cannot be provided due to group size or limited availability, modifications may be made. Where separate accommodations are not available, additional supervision is required. If adults and youth of the same gender occupy a single room, there must be a minimum of two adults and four youth, with all adults being Youth Protection trained. Physical separation by other means, including temporary barriers or space, should be used only when no other arrangements are possible.

Respect privacy. The use of smartphones, cameras, mirrors, drones, etc., is prohibited in places or situations where privacy is expected. Adults and youth must respect each other's privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp. Separate shower and latrine facilities should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. If separate facilities are not available, separate times should be scheduled and posted. Adult leaders should closely monitor these areas but only enter as needed for youth protection or health and safety reasons.

No secrets, hazing, or initiations. It is not OK for others to ask you to keep secrets or engage in activities that they would not want your leader or parents to know about. All parts of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders. The BSA does not recognize any secret organizations—which often involve hazing and initiations—as part of its program.

Public displays of affection. Sexual activity and inappropriate public displays of affection are prohibited in all Scouting activities.

Proper attire. Proper clothing is required for all activities.

See It. Stop It. Report It.

Adult leaders and youth members have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment for everyone. If you see abuse or any violation of BSA Youth Protection policies, bring it to a stop if you can safely do so. You should then speak with a trusted adult about the incident that you experienced or witnessed.

THE THREE R'S

While every situation is different, you can protect yourself from abuse by remembering the three R's of personal safety: **recognize, respond, and report.**

CONCERNS ABOUT REPORTING

Confiding in another person after someone has hurt you can be difficult, but there are people who will believe you and want to help. If you or anyone you know has been abused, it's important that you tell someone you trust. If you don't feel you can trust anyone at home, you can talk to a teacher, school nurse, counselor, coach, or another trusted adult. Do not keep the abuse a secret, even if the abuser tells you that something bad will happen if you tell.

Sometimes, a person you turn to may not want to believe the abuse really occurred. If this happens, just tell someone else. Don't give up until you get the help you need to feel safe.

BEING A GOOD—AND SAFE—SCOUT

When you became a Scout, you promised to be faithful to the rules of Scouting found in the Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan. These rules, which apply to you and others, will never require you to put yourself in potentially dangerous situations.

Sometimes people who do not need help will ask for it to create an opportunity for abuse. You should be familiar with five rules of personal safety.

A Scout is brave. Telling a trusted adult when you think a friend is being abused or neglected is a Good Turn that could even save a life.

Personal Safety

When feeling threatened, you have the right to

- Trust your instincts or feelings.
- Expect privacy.
- Say no to unwanted touching or affection.
- Say no to anyone's inappropriate demands and requests.
- Withhold information that could jeopardize your safety.
- Have your personal, emotional, and property boundaries respected, just as you respect the boundaries of others.
- Refuse gifts.
- Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants.
- Run, scream, and make a scene.
- Physically fight off unwanted advances.
- Ask for help.



The Scout Law also states that a Scout is obedient. However, that does not mean you have to obey an adult or another youth when that person tells you to do something that you feel is wrong or abusive. In these situations, talk with your leader, trusted adult, or parent.

MAKING GOOD CHOICES

Common sense, ethics, wisdom, and good judgment help you make good choices and allow you to do your best with what you know. The skills you have can prepare you for what lies ahead. Self-leadership will help you develop a vision of what is right and the steps for getting there. The Scout Oath and Scout Law will provide guidance along the way.

GOOD JUDGMENT IN CHOOSING FRIENDS

Your friends are among the most important people in your life. You enjoy being with them and going places together. They understand you. You depend on one another for support through good times and bad. Good friends can be with you for many years to come.



A good friend or buddy will hold you accountable. They will encourage you to get your homework done before you go out to play, and ask you how you're doing on your Scout advancement. If you start making bad decisions, a good friend or buddy will call you out. And you will do the same.

Choose friends whose values you share and admire. Be open to those who are not just like everyone else you know. Differences in race, culture, and language may keep some people at a distance, but those differences can also be doorways for you to expand your understanding of other people and of the world. Disabilities might seem to be barriers to friendship, too, but look beyond what seems to separate you. You might be surprised to discover how much you have in common with others and how much you can share with one another.

PEER PRESSURE

At some point while you are growing up, you will probably discover that some friends or acquaintances are doing things you know are wrong. They might be using tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs, or engaging in sexual activity. Maybe they are cheating on tests, or harassing or bullying others. Or they could be stealing, vandalizing, or committing other crimes. They may want you to join them, even though you know you shouldn't. When you refuse, they might say they will stop being friends with you. But real friends will not ask you to do anything that could put you at risk or hurt others.

BULLYING AND HAZING

Bullying happens when someone uses their power and position to frighten, embarrass, harass, or threaten another person. This behavior may be repeated over time. Anyone who is bullied or bullies others may have serious, lasting problems that need to be addressed.

Hazing is bullying that involves forcing someone to do something unpleasant, stupid, or dangerous, usually as a requirement for joining a group.

Bullying and hazing can lead to poor self-image, low self-esteem, physical problems, and worse in the person being targeted. People who are bullied often grow up to bully others, creating a continuing cycle of pain.

All forms of bullying, harassment, hazing, and initiations are prohibited in Scouting.

Bullying can take many forms:

- **Verbal.** Name-calling and teasing
- **Social.** Spreading rumors, leaving the target out of activities, and breaking up or manipulating friendships
- **Physical.** Hitting, pushing, shoving, and physical coercion

- **Group.** Intimidation and ostracizing
- **Criminal.** Injury, assault, and sexual aggression
- **Cyberbullying.** Using digital technology (social media, mobile phones, computers, etc.) to do any of the above

Youth who bully often operate in the open because they think what they're doing enhances their status in the group. (It doesn't.) However, some youth who bully—especially online—act in secret.

You might be able to tell someone is being bullied if that person:

- Seems reluctant to join activities
- Comes to activities late or leaves early
- Seems afraid or acts nervous around certain people
- Avoids certain places
- Shows increased anger for no obvious reason
- Talks about wanting to carry a weapon for self-protection
- Talks about loneliness or suicide
- Takes blame for all their problems
- Doesn't stand up against being teased or pushed
- Suddenly has fewer friends

StopBullying.gov offers a variety of available training and information materials to Scouts and adult leaders that can help you and your troop learn more about how to stop bullying.

HOW TO STOP BULLYING

The Scout Law calls on you to be helpful, friendly, courteous, and kind. That means that you should never bully and that you should help to stop bullying when it's happening to people around you.

Here are some simple actions you can take to stop bullying if you feel safe doing so.

- **Be an "upstander," not a bystander.** Instead of saying nothing, which can make the person who bullies think the behavior is OK, tell them to stop. Say you don't like what they're doing and that it isn't funny.
- **Avoid bullying back.** It won't help if you use mean names or actions. And it could make things worse.

If you don't feel safe—for example, if you think the person who is bullying will attack you next—you can still help. Here's what you can do:

- **Say kind words to the person being bullied, such as, “I’m sorry about what happened” and “I don’t like what that kid said.”** Help the person understand that it’s not their fault. Be a friend.
- **Tell the person being bullied to talk to someone about what happened.** Offer to help by going along.
- **Pay attention to the other people who see the bullying.** Are any of these bystanders laughing or joining in with the bullying?
- **Tell a trusted adult.** The person being bullied needs help from an adult, and the person doing the bullying probably does, too. By telling an adult, you can start the healing process.



STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Today most of us are online more than ever before. You may use the internet to do research, to check the latest sports scores, to connect with family and friends, to play games, and to have fun.

Unfortunately, some people use the internet for bad purposes, such as to spread malware, to steal people’s financial information, and to engage in cyberbullying or online grooming. This means you need to be just as careful online as you are in day-to-day life.

THE CYBER CHIP

A great way to learn about staying safe online is by earning the BSA’s Cyber Chip. Much like the Totin’ Chip shows that you know how to use woods tools properly, the Cyber Chip shows that you know how to use the internet properly. The Cyber Chip requirements vary based on your grade in school, but they include the following:

- Reading and signing the Internet Safety Pledge
- Making a contract with your parent or guardian about how you will use computers and mobile devices
- Watching videos about staying safe online
- Teaching others about internet safety
- Discussing with your Scoutmaster the proper use of electronic devices during troop meetings and outings

The Cyber Chip expires annually. When you renew it, you will have the chance to learn the latest information about internet safety.

Internet Safety Pledge

- I will think before I post.
- I will respect other people online.
- I will respect digital media ownership.
- I won't meet face-to-face with anyone I meet in the digital world unless I have my parent's permission.
- I will protect myself online.

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Follow these guidelines to stay safe online:

Don't give out personal or emotionally private information online. If you would feel uncomfortable seeing what you are typing or posting on a billboard, don't put it on the internet.

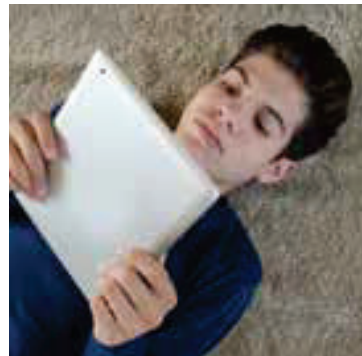
Create a positive online footprint. Things that you post online last forever in cyberspace. Pause and think before you post. Step away from the computer or your cellphone if you are upset or angry. If you do make a mistake, own up to it, learn from it, and start making online choices that you can feel proud standing behind.

Be kind. Remember that friends you interact with on the internet are real people with real feelings. They can be wounded by social media posts as easily as they can be wounded by insults in the lunchroom at school. Words have power both online and offline, so use words that build community rather than create division.

Listen to your gut instinct. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is. If a website seems dangerous, click away from it. If a conversation makes you uncomfortable, end it immediately. Don't agree to meet in person anyone you've met online without your parents' involvement and permission.

Help keep the internet safe. Don't send or forward disturbing, harassing, or provocative emails. If you are on the receiving end of cyberbullying, do not respond but report it instead. Offer support to those who are targeted by cyberbullying.

Respect boundaries. Refuse to send or receive sexual pictures with your phone or online devices. Help create a culture of respect.



Use reporting resources. Most websites have terms of service that describe how they should be used, as well as ways to report misuse and abuse. If someone is using a site to cause harm, follow the reporting guidelines for that site or tell a trusted adult.

THE SCOUT LAW AND THE INTERNET

As in all other aspects of life, when engaging in online activity, a Scout is:

Trustworthy. Be truthful with others online, unless it is not safe to do so, and be very careful of the information you share. If you are unsure, speak to your trusted adult. Do the right thing when sharing other people's words, pictures, music, and other creations. Make sure you have the owner's permission before using them.



Loyal. Share information about others only if you have their permission to share it. Uphold appropriate agreements you make with friends when you play games with them.

Helpful. Alert others to scams, cheats, and suspicious sites. Point them to reliable and accurate sources of information. Encourage people to report bad behavior online.

Friendly. Reach out to support others who are doing good things, like posting quality creative works. Support those who are cyberbullied.

Courteous. Be polite and respectful. When you use other people's work, be sure to ask permission when necessary, follow fair-use standards, and give credit to the people who created and own the work.

Kind. Treat people with respect when you are interacting on social networks, playing games, talking or texting on a cellphone, or engaging in other digital activities.

Obedient. When using digital devices, follow the rules set by your parents or guardians, teachers, and Scout leaders. Abide by the rules established by sites, services, devices, and games.

Cheerful. Use games, messaging tools, and social forums to build relationships with others while having fun.

Thrifty. Be a smart consumer. Know your voice, text, and data plans, and use them wisely. Be sure to study digital devices and services you want. Before buying them, make sure you're not overspending on functions and features you won't need. Be careful not to run up charges on apps and sites.

Brave. Stand up for what is right. Do not participate in mocking and bullying others, even if your friends are doing it. Report suspected abuse to a trusted adult.

Clean. Use clean language and discuss only appropriate topics when using digital devices to communicate with others.

Reverent. Respect the feelings of other people. Do not use digital devices to spread irreverent ideas.

If you suspect attempted sexual exploitation of children using the internet, you or your parent can contact the CyberTipline® at 1-800-843-5678 or www.cybertipline.org. If the incident involves the Scouting program, call your council Scout executive immediately or email youth.protection@scouting.org.



KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE

This chapter has covered some very important topics for your safety and the safety of others, and the support that those who lead you in Scouting are expected to provide. Abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment are major issues facing you today in your home, school, community, and potentially even in Scouting. While adults are responsible for maintaining safe environments, many times they do not know what is going on with you and other Scouts. Personal safety awareness, as well as having a good knowledge of the Barriers to Abuse and how and when to report violations, will be essential to keeping you and others safe in and out of Scouting.





YOUTH *PROTECTION*



**How to Protect Your
Children From Child Abuse:**
A Parent's Guide



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



DEAR PARENT

Welcome to SCOUTING! We are so pleased that you have decided to join our movement, and we look forward to working together with your family to raise leaders of character who will shape our future in a positive way.

Through Scouting, youth can develop strong connections and make important contributions to their families, their community, and society at large. We would like to congratulate you for choosing a program with the key ingredients for helping youth grow into competent, caring, and confident adults. Research about highly effective programs has shown that these ingredients are:

- Positive and sustained adult-youth relationships
- Youth activities that build life skills
- Youth participation in and leadership of valued community activities

The Scouting program significantly enhances opportunities for personal development, including higher grades, school engagement, self-esteem, and resilience. The program provides a safe environment where relationships are built with caring and competent adults, where youth are encouraged to take leadership of their development, and where useful life skills are acquired.

The programs of the BSA focus on developing leaders of character. We do this by presenting and reinforcing the values



found in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. It is enormously important for our members to have a moral compass and a strong work ethic to go along with it. For more information on the benefits of Scouting, go to www.scouting.org/programs/.

To realize the potential of Scouting, it is critical that we take all possible steps to create and maintain a safe environment for all who participate. That involves understanding personal boundaries and knowing what appropriate behaviors are in Scouting. Research indicates one of the best deterrents against child abuse is an open and continuous conversation between parents and their children. The following information is offered to help your family establish and maintain a safe environment where you can prevent your child or another child from being abused. This information can also empower you to stop abuse as soon as possible and seek the necessary help. The Committee for Children recommends having the Hot Chocolate Talk to begin the conversation. (See “National Resources.”)

Child abuse is something we would rather not talk about, or even think about, but we must. Many of us find it challenging and difficult to begin this conversation with our children, and the risk is that we might never get around to it. There are numerous factors that can lead to abuse. Together, you and your program leader must work together to ensure all Youth Protection and Health and Safety policies are understood and followed. For additional information, see “Additional BSA Resources” on page 26. **Your child is that important.** In fact, all of our children are that important. **Youth Protection Begins With YOU.**

The information you will read is not meant to scare you. It is meant to raise your awareness about many forms of abuse and how to recognize it and report it. It is part of the BSA’s commitment to creating safe environments for all youth. The Centers for Disease Control, the Vision for Violence Prevention, and youth-serving medical facilities committed to preventing child maltreatment refer to child abuse as a public health epidemic. The BSA and other youth-serving organizations are committed to investing resources and engaging their top experts to end all forms of child abuse and maltreatment.

Using This Booklet

This booklet can't address all threats to personal safety for our children in and out of Scouting, but it will inform and empower you to better **recognize**, **respond** to, and **report** most forms of abuse and begin the conversation. The first section contains information for parents about child abuse and some tips for talking with your child about child abuse. In the second section, we put that knowledge to work with exercises for you to share with your child. Research shows that children whose parents talk to them about preventing abuse are better able to protect themselves and are more likely to tell if they are experiencing abuse or have been abused.

This conversation is the start of a dialogue between you and your child about personal safety awareness. As your child grows, look for opportunities to strengthen open communication and give them the reassurance that no matter how frightening something may be, you and other trusted adults are there to help.

WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

Before we can understand what to do about abuse, we must understand what we mean by *abuse*. Children can experience abuse in many ways: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse. Often a child who is abused in one way is abused in multiple ways. When we protect a child from one form of abuse, such as neglect, we are often protecting the child from additional forms of abuse.

Abuse often occurs in the home by parents, stepparents, siblings, and other youth and/or caretakers. It also occurs in schools, churches, and youth-serving organizations. Regardless of what you have heard, there is no known profile of an abuser or child molester. However, there are behaviors that children exhibit that may be an indicator that the child is being abused. Abuse can occur despite our screening process, which includes criminal background checks, reference checks, and checks against the Volunteer Screening Database. For more information on the BSA's screening protocol, see the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, found at www.scouting.org.



The overall safety of your child is important to us. If you have any concerns about the safety of your child or the actions of leaders or parents, contact your local council Scout executive immediately.

In an emergency, when you are unable to reach the Scout executive, the BSA provides a 24-hour helpline: 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

The Scouts First Helpline is a resource for incidents involving child abuse or serious risk of harm to children only. It is not for general information or questions.

For questions about training, policy interpretation, program, etc., please contact your Scout executive or Member Care at 972-580-2489.

Sexual Abuse

When an adult or older youth uses his or her authority to involve a child in any type of sexual activity, it is child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with persons using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Another type of sexual abuse occurs when an adult or youth crosses clear boundaries in communications, or exposes the youth to alcohol, drugs, or pornography. Children can be at risk of sexual abuse anywhere there is access or opportunity, such as at home; at a neighbor's house; at school, field trips, and public events; and even in Scouting.

A common misconception about sexual abuse is that children are most likely to be abused by strangers. In fact, the abuser is usually someone the child knows and trusts, and most likely is known to you, the parent. These adults or youth are most often male, but females also can be offenders.

Sexual Abuse by Adults

Adults who abuse children may manipulate, bribe, coerce, threaten, or force a child into feeling like a partner in the sexual activity. They most often use a multistep "grooming" process that focuses on the child's needs and possibly on the child's parents as well. Adults who may sexually harm your child might offer free

babysitting services or overnight trips, for example, or make friends with you to gain enough trust to be alone with the child.

Once the potential abuser has identified the target child, characteristically, the grooming process moves to what looks like harmless touching—such as hugging and massages—or exposure, and looking for chances to be alone with the child. The person usually seeks a child who craves affection or attention and makes that child feel special by spending a lot of time with them and giving gifts and money. All children are vulnerable to sexual abuse because of their innocence, naivete, and total trust in and dependence upon adults.

A red flag is a leader who violates the BSA's Youth Protection policy of no one-on-one contact in Scouting and seeks one-on-one contact with youth, especially outside of the Scouting program and utilizing digital and social media for such contact.

When the individual senses that the child has become comfortable with physical contact and has an emotional bond, the physical contact becomes more intense. The individual may prey on the child's natural curiosity about sexuality and may say that they are helping or teaching them sex education. The individual may suggest playing inappropriate games. The grooming may involve violating rules, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes—all to create a "special relationship."

Most children don't know they are being groomed until it is too late.

Many abusers are clever enough to trick the victim into believing that they are equally to blame or will not be believed if they tell. Other abusers will manipulate the emotional bond and threaten to withhold love and attention if the child tells anyone. Many children feel trapped, overwhelmed, or ashamed and are afraid to tell.

Some children find it difficult to immediately report or disclose the abuse because of fear or love of the individual abusing them.

Sexual Abuse by Other Youth

It is also possible for a child of similar age or older to abuse another through force, position of authority, or manipulation. About a third of sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other



children, including siblings, relatives, older youth, and youth in positions of authority and supervision who manipulate through bullying behavior using their size or authority. Overnight activities pose a greater risk of abuse including sleepovers, campouts, etc. Any peer activity, such as a club initiation or hazing, in which sexual activity is included, is a form of sexual abuse and should be addressed and reported immediately.

Adults who learn or discover that youth-on-youth abuse has occurred or who have concerns about youth exhibiting questionable, problematic, or illegal sexual behaviors must take immediate steps to stop it and report. Refer to www.ncsby.org as a resource for additional information.

Responding/Reporting

If you suspect a child has experienced sexual abuse or has sexually abused other children inside or outside of Scouting, call 911 immediately and make a report *as required by your state and child protective services, or CPS*. Additional reporting may be required by your state.

Additionally, contact your local council Scout executive. If the Scout executive is unavailable, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate injury of a child by a person responsible for the child's care.

Physical abuse injuries can include bruises, broken bones, burns, and scrapes. Children experience minor injuries as a normal part of childhood, usually in places such as the shins, knees, and elbows. When injuries do not seem to be the typical "bumps and bruises" of childhood or do not match the explanation given, it is possible that the child is being or has been abused.

Blows to the stomach may result in abdominal bruises, even if you can't see a mark. When a child complains of pain or says that they have been punched in the stomach, this should be taken seriously, because there may be internal injury.

The following signs are commonly associated with abuse but are not absolutes:

- Explanations of an injury, provided to you by a child or parent, that don't make sense
- Injuries on a child who has been absent from school or youth activities
- Complaints of soreness when moving
- Fear of going home with or to parents

Neglect

Neglect often involves depriving a child of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or other necessities of life. Neglect can also involve exposing a child to harmful substances or materials, such as drugs, alcohol, or pornography, or to harmful practices such as violent behavior.

A number of clues suggest that a child might be neglected. The child who frequently comes to meetings with excessive body odor, the child who is frequently unkempt, the child who is living in a dangerous environment, and the child with an obvious medical need that goes unattended all are showing signs that they could be neglected. So is the child who is always hungry or who hoards or steals food, the child who is seldom dressed appropriately for the weather, and the child who regularly talks of seeing a parent drunk or bruised from being hit.

Any time a child shows a need or condition that a reasonable parent would attend to—especially when failure to provide for the need harms the child's physical or emotional well-being—the child is likely being neglected.

Emotional Abuse

A child suffers from emotional abuse when continually ridiculed, blamed, humiliated, or compared unfavorably with others.

Emotional abuse damages the child's self-esteem. Studies find that emotional abuse is just as harmful as, if not more harmful than, other forms of abuse. It can lead to developmental problems, speech delays, depression, anxiety, and conditions such as low empathy and difficulty with friends.



Emotional abuse can occur when a parent completely ignores, rejects, or regularly threatens to beat a child, or when a child struggles to meet a parent's unreasonable expectations in academics, athletics, or other areas. Emotional abuse can also result if an adult or older youth provides a child with alcohol, drugs, pornography, or other harmful substances or materials.

Spiritual Abuse

An often-overlooked form of child maltreatment is spiritual abuse—the incorporation of religion into the abuse of a child. Some studies suggest that adults who abuse children are particularly attracted to faith communities because they find clergy and other faith leaders to be very trusting. If your child is active in a faith community, make sure to ask about what youth protection policies they have in place.

Youth With Developmental Disabilities/Special Needs

Children with disabilities or behavioral problems are at greater risk of abuse than other children. Adults who abuse children believe that youth with disabilities will be least likely to report the abuse. Accordingly, while it is important to teach all children to recognize would-be abusers and to tell a trusted adult about abuse, this message is particularly important for children with disabilities.

Special Considerations

It is vital that parents be forthcoming with unit leaders about any concerns or expectations you have about your child, as well as medication that may influence behavior.

Signs Your Child Might Have Been Abused

The clearest sign of abuse is that your child tells you that someone hurt or scared them or made them feel uncomfortable or you uncover evidence of abuse. Unfortunately, many children never speak of abuse, so it is important for you to maintain communications where your child can openly discuss matters of personal safety. Remember, reassuring them that they can tell you anything needs to be a continuous message you deliver.

If your child has been abused by a parent, relative, sibling, Scout, Scout leader, or someone else close to you, it may be particularly difficult for the child to disclose the abuse to you and also difficult for you to accept. Studies show that children rarely lie about sexual abuse or other maltreatment. So if your child tells you that they

have been abused, or if your child is especially uncomfortable with a particular person or situation, always take the behavior as your sign to act. Remember, children communicate with us through their words, actions, and feelings. Communication about abuse is often subtle and indirect. A child may not come right out and say something; instead they may say, "I have a friend who ...," to see how an adult will react. The child who receives a helpful, thoughtful, and sympathetic response is more likely to reveal that they are not actually talking about their friend and tell you about abuse experiences. Listen carefully.

Each child's response to abuse is unique. Signs of stress frequently accompany abuse, but stress can have many causes. Other possible indicators of abuse include

- Sudden withdrawal from activities the child previously enjoyed
- Reluctance to be around or, especially, alone with a particular individual, adult or youth
- Changes in behavior or in school performance, including lower grades
- Inability to focus or learning problems with no known cause
- Hypervigilance (excessive watchfulness as if anticipating something bad happening)
- Overly compliant behavior or an excessive desire to please

In addition, a child currently being sexually abused may

- Have difficulty sitting or walking
- Complain of pain or itching in the genital or anal areas
- Use sexually explicit language or act out sexual behavior inappropriate for their age

For more information, take the BSA's Youth Protection Training at <https://my.scouting.org>.

Responding/Reporting

It is OK to ask a child about suspicious injuries or behaviors. In fact, you should. If the child tells of abuse or gives an answer that doesn't make sense and you feel the child is in danger, you should immediately contact the local law enforcement agency or state department of children and family services. You also need to



contact your local council Scout executive. If your local council Scout executive is not available, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

Scouts First Helpline

As part of its “Scouts First” approach to the protection and safety of youth, the BSA has established a dedicated 24-hour helpline to receive reports of known or suspected abuse or behavior that puts a youth at immediate risk.

In an emergency, when you are unable to reach the Scout executive, the BSA provides a 24-hour helpline: 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

The Scouts First Helpline is a resource for incidents involving child abuse or serious risk of harm to children only. It is **not** for general information or questions.

For questions about training, policy interpretation, program, etc., please contact your Scout executive or Member Care at 972-580-2489.

1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871)

When to use it:

- Anytime you believe a youth has been harmed or their safety and well-being is at risk, and you cannot immediately reach your local council Scout executive or local council.
- If a Scout is bullied because of race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, and local efforts are unable to resolve the problem.

If someone is at immediate risk of harm, always call 911.

For more information about reporting requirements, call 911 or see the Child Welfare Information Gateway website at www.childwelfare.gov for your state hotline number.

Bullying/Cyberbullying

Bullying is any intentional, aggressive behavior, often involving an imbalance of power or strength, that usually is repeated over a period of time. Bullying can take many forms, including hitting or punching, teasing or name calling, intimidating use of gestures or social exclusion, or sending insulting messages by phone or computer (cyberbullying). If your child is being targeted, do not

blame your child or tell them to ignore the behavior or engage in physical retaliation. Instead, listen carefully and report the bullying behavior to the people responsible for the program where bullying is occurring. For more information, please see the BSA's Bullying Awareness webpage at www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/bullying or www.stopbullying.gov.

Victims of bullying behavior are more likely to be depressed, have low self-esteem, be absent from school or other activities, feel sick, or think about death by suicide.

Any information indicating a youth has mentioned or talked about suicide must be taken seriously and reported to the Scout executive so appropriate actions may be taken. If unable to reach the Scout executive, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).



Internet/Social Media Safety

Today's youth are spending more time than ever using digital media for education, research, socializing, and fun. Unfortunately, abusers know this too. Parents play an important role in keeping children safe from those who use the internet and social media to access and harm children. Parents can limit the danger by setting basic guidelines such as when children go online, what sites they can visit, and having regular check-ins to see and discuss the choices that are being made with technology. To help families and volunteers keep youth safe while online, the BSA introduced the Cyber Chip. In developing this tool, the BSA teamed up with content expert NetSmartz®, part of the National Center for Missing and Exploited



Children® and training expert for many law enforcement agencies. Earning the Cyber Chip is a requirement for the Scout rank. For more information, please see the BSA's Cyber Chip webpage at www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip and NCMEC's Netsmartz website at www.netsmartz.org. The NCMEC's CyberTipline number is 800-843-5678.



The BSA's Barriers to Abuse

Our goal in the BSA is to create and maintain a safe environment so that all can benefit from the program. The greatest positive step that we can take together is to put us all in a position to succeed by having rules that we all agree to follow. You should expect your child's troop to follow the Youth Protection policies put in place by the BSA to provide additional safety for your child and all who are involved in Scouting. These policies are helpful for anyone who works with or spends time with children who are not theirs, and not just in Scouting. They are practices used by teachers, doctors, camp counselors, coaches, and other adults who professionally work with children. Youth Protection policies and Health and Safety procedures continue to be updated regularly. For the most up-to-date information and changes or additions to policies and procedures, go to www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.

You should discuss these policies with your child so that you, your child, and leaders have a shared understanding of what is expected in Scouting.

Leader Registration Requirements

The chartered organization representative, or in their absence the executive officer of the chartering organization, must approve the registration of the unit's adult leaders.

Registration includes:

- Completion of application including criminal background check and mandatory Youth Protection training
- Volunteer Screening Database check

Youth Protection training is required for leaders when renewing their registration or at unit charter renewal.

Adult program participants must register as adults and follow Youth Protection policies. Up-to-date Youth Protection and Health and Safety information is available at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.

Adult Supervision

Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including meetings. There must be a registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth. Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age- and program-appropriate supervision must always be provided.

All adults accompanying a Scouting unit who are present at the activity for 72 total hours or more must be registered as leaders. The 72 hours need not be consecutive.

One-on-one contact between adult leaders and youth members is prohibited both inside and outside of Scouting.

- In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.
- Private online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, etc.) must include another registered leader or parent.
- Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) must include another registered leader or parent.



Discipline must be constructive.

- Discipline must reflect Scouting's values.
- Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- Disciplinary activities involving isolation, humiliation, or ridicule are also prohibited.

Responsibility

Leaders must ensure that all participating in Scouting activities abide by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Adult leaders and youth members share the responsibility for the safety of all participants in the program, including adherence to Youth Protection and Health and Safety policies.

- Adult leaders are responsible for monitoring behavior and intervening when necessary.
- Physical violence, sexual activity, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, unauthorized weapons, hazing, discrimination, harassment, initiation rites, bullying, cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in the Scouting program and may result in revocation of registration.

All leaders are required to adhere to the Scouter Code of Conduct located in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.

Accommodations

Separate accommodations for adult males and females and youth males and females are required.

Tenting

- Separate tenting arrangements must be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth.
- Youth sharing tents must be no more than two years apart in age.
- In Scouts BSA, youth and adults tent separately.
- Spouses may share tents.



Lodging/Cabin Accommodations

Whenever possible, separate cabins or lodging should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. Where separate accommodations cannot be provided due to group size or limited availability, modifications may be made. Where completely separate accommodations are not available, additional supervision is required.

- If adults and youth of the same gender occupy single-room accommodations, there must be a minimum of two adults and four youth, with all adults being Youth Protection trained.
- Physical separation by other means, including temporary barriers or space, should be used only when no other arrangements are possible.
- These modifications are limited to single-gender accommodations.

Restrooms

Separate shower and latrine facilities should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. If separate facilities are not available, separate times should be scheduled and posted.

Privacy of youth is respected.

- Adults and youth must respect each other's privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp.



- Adult leaders should closely monitor these areas but only enter as needed for youth protection or health and safety reasons.

Program Requirements

The buddy system should always be used.

The use of smartphones, cameras, mirrors, drones, etc., in places or situations where privacy is expected is prohibited.

All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders.

The BSA does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program.

Hazing and initiations are prohibited and have no part during any Scouting activity.

All forms of bullying and harassment including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying are prohibited.

Inappropriate public displays of affection are prohibited.

Sexual activity is prohibited.

Appropriate attire is required for all activities.

Reporting Requirements

Adult leaders and youth members have a responsibility to recognize, respond to, and report Youth Protection violations and abuse.

Mandatory Report of Child Abuse

If you see or suspect a child is being abused, stop the abuse immediately and report it. All persons involved in BSA programs must report any instance of child abuse to local law enforcement and, in some states, also to the state's child protective services, or CPS. This includes any good-faith suspicion or belief that a 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 sexually exploitive images, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material.

This duty cannot be delegated to any other person. After reporting to law enforcement, the matter must also be reported to the Scout executive so appropriate actions may be taken. If

unable to reach the Scout executive, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

Ensure notification has been made to parents/guardian. Failing to report suspected child abuse may be a criminal law violation in your state. It is important to note that all states allow immunity from criminal and civil liability for good-faith reporting of suspected abuse, even if it is later determined to be unfounded.

For more information, please see your state's reporting statutes on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website at www.childwelfare.gov.

Additional BSA Reporting

Youth Protection Policy Violations

- Serious Youth Protection policy violations or behaviors that put a youth's safety at risk must be reported to the local council Scout executive.
- Alternatively, policy violations may be reported to the Scouts First Helpline when the local council Scout executive is not available.
- Online reporting is also available at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report.

Speaking With a Child Who Discloses or Indicates Abuse

When speaking with a child who discloses or indicates abuse, your role is to become the *trusted adult*. A trusted adult is someone with whom a child can talk freely about their feelings and problems and who provides healthy guidance and support.

When informed about abuse, a trusted adult

- Gets actively involved.
- Sees something and stops it.
- Suspects something and reports it.

Seek advice from an expert when you are unsure.

Adults should recognize that talking with children about abuse, especially sexual abuse, is not comfortable for anyone; however, a child's first time telling someone—and your response—may have lasting effects. If a child reports that they have been abused, it is important that you listen to all that they have to say. Then, respond



calmly and support the child through the reporting process. Tell the child it wasn't their fault and express belief in the child's disclosure by simply stating, "I believe you." This will further support and validate the child's statement. You do not need details from the child. However, you should get the following information:

- Name and address of the child alleging abuse, if known
- Name and address of the alleged offender, if known
- Location of the alleged abuse
- Nature (e.g., sexual, physical, emotional) and extent of the alleged abuse
- Approximate date of the last incident (if an older child)

Parents Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies

If an adult leader or someone else in Scouting is trying to convince your child that their advancements or awards are solely dependent on that person's approval, or if that person is asking your child to do anything that seems inappropriate, contact your local council Scout executive immediately.

EXERCISES ON PERSONAL SAFETY AWARENESS

Now that you understand the types of abuse, the barriers that we have put in place to minimize abuse, and the steps to take when you suspect abuse has occurred, let's focus on helping you empower your child. Concerned and connected parents and caregivers are a strong component of all child abuse prevention strategies. You have an important role to play in prevention!

Many parents find it difficult to talk with their child about abuse. However, it is important to provide a foundation for a child to understand personal safety and encourage them to come to you with questions and concerns. The personal safety exercises in this section, to be used in conversations with your child, will help you with this process. They focus on five very important areas that can minimize the chances of abuse for your child:

- Why should I check with a parent first?
- Who are my *trusted adults*?
- What are my personal boundaries?
- What if someone asks me to keep a secret?
- How do I talk about touches and private parts?

Five Topics to Cover With Scouts

NOTE: Completing the exercises described in these pages fulfills the requirements for your Scout to earn their Scout badge. The BSA recommends that these exercises be conducted on a regular basis throughout the year.



Why should I check with a parent first?

Many abusers are known to the child as a family friend, relative, Scouter, or older youth, so it is important to focus safety messages on the behavior of a person, not the relationship to the child. Teach your child to check with you first before agreeing to go anywhere with another person. Tell your child never to go anywhere with anyone who will not let them check with you first. If the person refuses, your child has the right to step back from the person, make noise, say “No,” run away, and tell someone.

Tell your child that your permission is required before they may accept an invitation from a Scout leader or another parent to an activity outside of Scouting and that all such invitations must be



reported to you. The BSA recommends that parents not allow one-on-one contact and insist that two adults are present (two-deep leadership) at any Scouting activities for their children.

Try this exercise to help your child remember to check first. Brainstorm times and situations in which your child should always come to you before going somewhere with someone. Include such situations as going into a house or vehicle, changing plans, being offered gifts, and being asked for help.

Talk through and role-play the following scenarios:

“What if a neighbor asks you to come into his house to see his new gaming system?”

“What if you are at the mall and someone asks you to help carry their packages?”

“What if a teacher invites you to their home to play one-on-one basketball after a group study session?”

What are my personal boundaries?

Try this exercise to help your child learn to create and maintain personal boundaries that make them feel safe. This exercise is designed to empower kids to tell people that they are uncomfortable and want another person to leave their personal space immediately. Discuss what private parts are and where they are located. Lessons on personal boundaries should begin early in a child’s development and should cover belongings, emotions, and their body. Focus on asking permission and receiving consent. Tell your child that any time someone touches them in a way that they do not want to be touched, they have your permission to take some big steps back and say “NO,” and then go tell a *trusted adult* what happened. Explain that stepping back can give them room to think and move. Then have your child practice taking big steps away from a person and saying “NO” in a firm voice. Explain to the child that regardless of what the adult or teenager says—or what your child was doing or has done—you will believe and protect them.

Talk through the following scenarios. Ask them how they could use “NO” to create space for themselves in these situations.

“What if someone drives up, gets out of their car, and starts walking toward you to ask you for directions?”

“What if another kid your age continues to hug you even though you have asked them to stop?”

“What if you are spending the night or on a campout and someone touches your body while you are sleeping?”



How do I talk about touches and private parts?

Young people should be told that the parts of their body covered by their swimsuit are their private parts, and they have the right to say no to being touched there. Body parts should be called by their appropriate names to assist in developing a healthy and positive body image. Encourage your child to say no and then tell you if someone tries to touch or look at the child’s private parts, or wants your child to touch or look at their private parts.

It is important to remind children that if they get tricked into a scary or confusing touch or if they freeze and are unable to say no, it is OK and not their fault. Children should be encouraged to tell as soon as they feel comfortable doing so. Keep the lines of communication open by reminding them that they can talk to you about touches, even a long time after something happened.



Try this exercise to help your child resist someone who is trying to touch their private parts. Pose these scenarios, and then discuss the solutions.

“What if an older guy starts to wrestle with you, but then the wrestling turns into private part touching?”

“What if that same guy yells at you as you are leaving that you should keep what happened a secret?”

“What if you are at a party and you see some of your friends carrying someone who isn’t awake into a room?”

For more information, see “Hot Chocolate Talk” under “National Resources.”

Who are my trusted adults?

Young people should have at least five adults you have identified with whom they can talk freely about their feelings and problems and who provide healthy attention and affection. A child who has such a network of *trusted adults* will be more difficult for an adult who abuses children to groom. The list of five adults might change depending on the child’s circumstances. Prior to Scouting or other activities, parents should discuss with their child who they will turn to if someone is violating a rule or making them uncomfortable.

Try this exercise to help your child identify trusted adults. Explain that a trusted adult is someone the child knows well who is willing to listen and offer advice when needed. Create a list of five trusted adults with your child. Explain that if a situation occurs where a trusted adult is needed, your child needs to remember this list. And if one of the people on the list cannot help, or is the one causing the problem, your child should go to another person on the list. Remind them that they can also say “NO” if a trusted adult is making them feel uneasy or uncomfortable.

Ask your child these questions, making sure the options are understood. Ask who their trusted adult would be and how they could talk to them about what happened.

“What if something happens on a camping trip (or at a neighbor’s house, or at a friend’s house) that makes you feel afraid or confused?”

“What if someone is making you feel uneasy or uncomfortable, and the first person you tell can’t, doesn’t, or won’t help you?”

“What if one of your *trusted adults* is making you feel unsafe or uncomfortable?”

What if someone asks me to keep a secret?

Adults who abuse children often try to groom children by convincing them to keep secrets about activities that they would not want their parents to know about (drinking, smoking, pornography, etc.). A child wanting to keep those activities secret might also see any abuse as something to keep secret. Your child must feel like they can come to you and be heard about little concerns as well as big problems. Tell your child it is not OK for people to ask them to keep a secret from you or another caregiver. Give your child a simple, automatic solution. Let your child know that they can come to you about anything and that you will still love and support them.

Try this exercise to help your child understand the difference between *secrets* and *surprises*. Tell your child that a secret is something that is hidden from others. A surprise is something that we keep quiet about for a short period of time and then everyone finds out together, like what you bought someone for their birthday. Surprises are usually OK, but secrets can be harmful if they cover up something unsafe or scary. Say that if your child is not sure whether something is a secret or a surprise, they can always ask you or a trusted adult.



Ask your child what to do in the following situations. Ask them how they could determine whether this is a surprise or a secret.

“What if a counselor at an overnight camp starts leaving secret gifts for you on your pillow?”

“What if someone you know asks if they can email you a secret picture?”

For additional information, please see the BSA’s Cyber Chip tool and resources at www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/cyber-chip and the NetSmartz Scouting Portal at www.netsmartz.org/scouting/.

Putting It Together

Reviewing these five personal safety rules and allowing your child to design their own “What If” games can help make personal safety awareness less scary and more accessible for your child and the whole family. The most important points to make sure your child knows are as follows:

- Check with a parent first.
- Have a buddy with you at all times.
- Maintain your personal space.
- Avoid secrets.
- Know who your *trusted adults* are.

Consider having a “Family Safety Night” at the beginning and the end of every school year or new activity. Reviewing rules about bike helmets, fire escape plans, and calling 911 should lead into conversations about abuse, bullying, personal safety awareness, and online safety so that they can be treated like any other concern.

The BSA’s Youth Protection program is based on

- Parental involvement
- Chartered organizations

- Leader selection and monitoring
- Each leader's knowledge of and adherence to BSA Youth Protection and Health and Safety policies
- Commitment of all adults to the safety of youth
- Recognizing, responding, and reporting
- Youth Protection Begins With YOU

ADDITIONAL BSA RESOURCES

Youth Protection webpage:

www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection

Youth Protection Training: <https://my.scouting.org>

Youth Protection policies and Health and Safety procedures continue to be updated regularly. For the most up-to-date information and changes or additions to policies and procedures, go to www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.

Guide to Safe Scouting: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss

Scouts First Helpline: 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871)

BSA Member Care: 972-580-2489

Scouter Code of Conduct: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/Scouter_Code_of_Conduct.pdf

BSA incident reporting:

www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report

State-by-state mandatory reporting information:

www.childwelfare.gov



NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children—information on digital/online safety and reporting

Netsmartz: www.netsmartz.org.

CyberTipline: 800-843-5678

www.childhelp.org: 800-4-A-Child (800-422-4453)

www.preventchildabuse.gov

Committee for Children: www.cfchildren.org

Hot Chocolate Talk: www.cfchildren.org/blog/2018/03/the-hot-chocolate-talk/

www.stopbullying.gov

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org: 800-273-8255

www.ncsby.org

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