



Youth Protection and the Boy Scouts of America

Youth protection is of paramount importance to the Boy Scouts of America. Recognizing that this commitment requires sustained vigilance, the BSA has continued to develop and enhance its efforts to protect youth, regularly consulting with experts from law enforcement, child safety, psychology, and other disciplines to ensure its efforts consistently evolve along with the ever-changing awareness of the dangers and challenges facing youth.

How it works:

The BSA takes a multi-layered approach to youth protection: (1) local selection of adult volunteers with the support of the national organization, (2) education and training, and (3) clear policies such as no "one on one" activities, and immediate reporting of any concerns.

1. Local Selection of Adult Volunteers With the Support of the National Organization

- **Chartered organizations provide local insight and ongoing supervision.**
The most important responsibility of a chartered organization is the selection of quality leadership for the Scout unit. The involvement of local chartered organizations (churches, schools, or civic groups) helps ensure that selected volunteers are known and trusted in the community.
- **Adults selected by chartered organizations apply for leadership roles.**
From its earliest days, the BSA has had a mandatory application and registration process to screen adult volunteers. The application requires adults who have been selected as potential leaders of youth by a chartered organization to provide references, past addresses, and other community affiliations, and to disclose any criminal conviction or allegations of child abuse. This information helps the chartered organization verify the applicant's suitability for Scout leadership.
- **The BSA requires criminal background checks on all adult volunteers.**
The BSA grants membership to an adult volunteer only after a national criminal background check is performed. The background checks are administered by LexisNexis, a nationally respected third party that also provides this service to local, state, and federal governments; educational institutions; and other nonprofits.

- **The BSA's Ineligible Volunteer Files provide an added layer of protection.** Scouting takes any allegations of inappropriate behavior seriously, whether or not the individual ever served as a Scout leader, and whether or not that person behaved inappropriately with a Scout or any other child. Scouting policy requires the prompt reporting of inappropriate conduct. When such issues are reported, the individual is added to the Ineligible Volunteer Files maintained by the National Council, whether or not the allegations are proven. The Ineligible Volunteer Files have successfully kept dangerous and potentially dangerous individuals out by enabling Scouting to identify those individuals who have been barred from the organization, even based on suspicion alone.

2. Education and Training

- **Every parent completing a youth membership form acknowledges awareness of the BSA's youth protection and affirms their intention to review the booklet, "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide,"** which is included in every Cub Scout and Boy Scout handbook. Every application for youth membership advises parents about the basic principles of youth protection, including the "two deep" leadership requirement for every Scouting activity.
- **Parents and youth are required to review Youth Protection materials as an advancement requirement.** Every Cub Scout and Boy Scout handbook includes a separate pamphlet that helps parents speak to their children about youth protection issues. Parents and youth are required to review these materials together before the child can advance in Scouting.
- **All adult volunteers are required to complete Youth Protection training every two years.** All adult volunteers, regardless of their position, must have completed Youth Protection training. This training must be taken every two years in order to renew membership. The training is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Scouting empowers youth Personal Safety Awareness skills, including the "three R's."** The "three R's" of Youth Protection convey an important message in a clear manner easily understood by youth members:
 - **Recognize** situations that place them at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone could be a molester.
 - **Resist** unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.
 - **Report** attempted or actual molestation to a parent or other trusted adult. This prevents further abuse and helps protect other children. Help them understand that they will not be blamed for what occurred.

- **Youth protection information is communicated through videos and other written materials.** The BSA makes Youth Protection videos and other resources available to units to present on an annual basis to their members. Scouts must take Youth Protection training periodically as a requirement for rank advancement. Educational materials are routinely updated and most are available in both English and Spanish.

3. Policy Initiatives

- **Mandatory Reporting.** 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. The Scout Executive must be notified of this report, or of any violation of BSA's Youth Protection policies, so he or she may take appropriate action for the safety of our Scouts, make appropriate notifications, and follow-up with investigating agencies.
- **The BSA has a Youth Protection director dedicated to the continued enhancement of Scouting's Youth Protection training programs and policies.** Effective July 24, 2010, Mike Johnson joined the BSA as its Youth Protection director. Johnson is a seasoned police detective and an internationally recognized expert on child abuse investigation and prevention who has conducted hundreds of training sessions for law enforcement and child services professionals around the world. Johnson, along with other professionals, employees, and Scouting volunteers, is constantly reviewing our Youth Protection policies, procedures, and training materials while also looking for opportunities to work with other organizations and experts to further advance our youth protection efforts.
- **At least two adults supervise all Scouting activities.** One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is not permitted. In compliance with the BSA's "two deep" leadership policy, two registered adult leaders or one registered leader and a parent of a participant, or other adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required on all trips and outings. In situations requiring a personal conference, such as a Scoutmaster's conference, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youth. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all Scouting activities.

- **Privacy of youth and adult members is safeguarded by BSA policy.** Adult leaders must respect the privacy of members and protect their own privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp. The BSA strongly encourages councils to have separate shower and latrine facilities for females as well as separate facilities for youth. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female and/or youth and adult showering should be scheduled and posted. No youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian.
- **Scouts are instructed to use cameras, cell phones, and other digital devices responsibly.** While most members use cameras, cell phones, and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade other individuals' privacy. Scouting policy prohibits the use of any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants. Additionally, Scouts are not to send sexually explicit photographs or videos electronically.
- **All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders.** The BSA does not allow any secret organizations as part of its program nor does it condone physical hazing or initiations as part of any Scouting activity. Parents are encouraged to attend all Scouting activities.
- **All of the BSA's Youth Protection policies are clearly defined and available for all to review.** BSA policies are included in training materials and posted online at www.Scouting.org , which clearly sets forth member and unit responsibilities.

Social Media Guidelines:

In conjunction with Youth Protection Month, April 2011, the BSA released guidelines for Scouts and Scouting's adult leaders on how to safely use social media. These guidelines are available at: <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx> and are part of the BSA's continuing effort to enhance and expand its youth protection programs.