Youth Protection Handbook

The purpose of this manual is to provide information that Scouts can use to (1) protect themselves from sexual abuse, (2) increase their understanding and knowledge of childl predator behaviors and the tactics they use to lure their victims, (3) safely remove themselves from any situation or encounter in which they feel threatened or uncomfortable and (4) report any incidents of inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse.

We know that there are individuals who desire to harm youth and are naturally drawn to youth programs of any kind. We want to stress that the odds of anything happening to our Scouts are, statistically, incredibly low. We are not discussing youth protection because we have to, but because we want to. A child is not more likely to harmed in our Scout Programs than in another youth program, in fact they are less likely to be harmed because our youth protection standards are so high.

You may not hear much about youth protection from other youth programs; that is not because it is not an issue, but because they choose not to discuss it. Unfortunately, a few even sweep allegations under the rug and simply transfer suspected abusers from one part of the country to the other. The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA operate transparently in all we do. Our number one priority is the health and safety of our Scouts. We raise this topic to shed the light of day in every corner of our Scout Programs. Our Counselors and Team Counselors are always on the alert for inappropriate behavior, making it as difficult as possible for youth to be harmed.
In the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA, we take seriously the goal of creating a safe environment for all. For this reason, the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA employ and have developed training materials for Team Sponsors, Counselors, Team Counselors, Scouts, Members, and parents outlining specific things to look for and consider when interacting with others, and examples of techniques molesters use to entice their victims.

Our Scouts are encouraged to trust their instincts and to protect themselves when they are either in an uncomfortable situation or with someone who they think might be behaving inappropriately, even if the person is an authority figure.

Children are taught by their parents not to talk to strangers. This is good advice. However, if you feel you are in a dangerous or threatening situation with someone behaving inappropriately, we and your parents want you to trust your instincts and seek help, even if it means seeking help from a stranger.

Rules and Guidelines to Keep Scouts Safe

• Always try to be with a buddy
• Always try to be in groups of 3 – 2 Scouts and 1 Counselor, or 2 Counselors and 1 Scout
• Scouts are not permitted to be off the premises with adults when participating or not in an official part of the Program as a Team or as a Crew.

Examples of situations which are be considered inappropriate are:
• physical examinations which an adult suggests are necessary or appropriate,
• having Scouts undress to explain parts of their uniform,
• sleeping in the same tent with Scouts,
• sharing the same sleeping bag or tent to stay warm,
• the application of products, such as suntan or calamine lotions, insect repellents, etc.,
• the grabbing or touching of private parts while swimming,
• roughhousing with others,
• being alone with a Scout,
• being in private with a Scout,
• being in an area with a Scout out of the view of others,
• no back rubs,
• showering with Scouts, unless all are clothed,

• changing in view of Scouts,
• no touching unless appropriate for time, place, and manner, for example, an awards presentation
• There are to be no secret organizations, or hazing rituals.

No one has the right to touch you in certain places, and if someone does, you must tell someone you trust right away, such a parent, Counselor, Team Counselor, teacher, religious leader, police officer, or family friend.

KMT

Know
Minimize
Tell

Know

Know who you are with, what is happening around you, and where you are.

Should you find yourself either in an uncomfortable situation or with someone who you think is behaving inappropriately, we encourage you to remove yourself from the situation as quickly and safely as possible. Instead, we want you to use the awareness you have acquired as a result of our Know, Minimize and Tell Training.

Minimize

Minimize injury to yourself. Then make every effort to remove yourself from the situation to a safer environment. Try to get away from the person and the environment. Make noise, scream, and yell for help. Many abusers can continue what they do because they depend upon their victim's embarrassment and silence.

If you are unable to get away and help is not available, use your own common sense. Fight the abuser often works, but sometimes fighting an abuser can result in injury. Use your best judgment.

Depending on the circumstances, several things that might help to minimize personal injury are:
• if you can, first run away to a safer environment,
• if, for whatever the reason, running away is not an option, then yell loudly,
• or react strongly and say "stop!"
• or draw attention to yourself.

Tell

Tell others so this person will not continue to harm you or harm others. Tell parents, Counselors, Team Counselors, or call our National Office. If a member of your Scout Program is not around, seek help from another adult in the area. The safest choice is a mother with children.

Youth Bill of Rights

Remember: These are actions that will give you the power to protect yourself, some of these might not be appropriate for situations where you are not physically threatened.

When feeling threatened, you have the right to:

• Trust your instincts or feelings
• Privacy
• Protect yourself
• Say "no" to an authority figure acting inappropriately

• Say “no” to unwanted touching or affection
• Refuse inappropriate gifts, such as expensive gifts, pornography, alcohol or drugs. Gifts are time, place, and manner appropriate such as a small token after winning an award.
• Withhold information that could jeopardize your safety
• Be rude and unhelpful if the situation warrants
• Physically fight off unwanted advances
• Scream, make noise, or be rude when you feel threatened
• Tell a parent, Counselor, or Team Counselor about an authority figure’s inappropriate behavior
• Be yourself and have FUN without feeling threatened or scared

Questions to Consider

Q: As a member, Scout, Counselor, or Team Counselor, what do I do if I suspect inappropriate behavior is going on?

Our Reporting document has full instructions on what to do, however if you believe illegal activity, particularly harmful activity, is going on, the first step is always to call the police. It is not for our members to decide whether there is enough evidence to merit a call to the police; law enforcement will gather evidence and decide if an allegation has merit or is unfounded.

Q: What after an allegation of abuse is reported?

When an allegation is made, either anonymously or specifically, our zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse triggers our established procedures.

Our zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse provides for the immediate suspension of all individuals when an allegation of improper or inappropriate behavior has been made against them. Their suspension status shall remain in force until the allegation is either determined to have merit or be unfounded. Should an allegation be determined to have merit, the membership of the previously suspended Member will be revoked. When an allegation is determined to be unfounded, the previously suspended Memb er will resume membership in good standing.

We try to always have a plain clothes law enforcement officer experienced in this particular field of expertise interview the potential victim making an allegation.

Q: How do you know that all adults participating with youth are registered?

At the time of registration, we request and keep a copy of identification in the form of state or federal photographic identification, which is acknowledged to have been personally observed by Team Sponsor representatives rather than only by Team Counselors.

Lists of registered individuals are provided to those in supervisory positions at all Team meetings or organized programs. The lists are used to verify, on a spot check basis, that all adults and Scouts in attendance are registered. At the time of registration at overnight activities, online checks are performed with the ability for password access to view the individual’s photograph and their status based upon the entering of their name and/or other information into a search screen.

Q: What happens when an adult suddenly decides to stay overnight. How fast can a background check be completed including a credit check and criminal background check?

This is important in circumstances when suddenly an adult is staying overnight unexpectedly. A photograph of the adult(s) staying overnight is emailed via cell phone cameras. At the time of registration at overnight activities, all adults entering must present picture identification, and that information is cross-referenced into an online database or printed list. This is one area in which parents can be of great assistance to us. We can run a credit check any time or the day or night, but a credit check does not give us much information. If an adult suddenly decides to stay

overnight, it can present a problem.

Consider the following scenario:

Billy's mother drops Billy off at the meeting location to go on a camping trip. One of the Counselors who was going on the trip is ill and can no longer go. Without another adult to go, the trip cannot take place. Billy's mother is there and available and offers to go on the camping trip. The problem is that Billy's mother is unregistered and technically is not allowed to go camping trips with our Scouts. We do not know who Billy's mother is. We can run a few quick checks, but we do not have the information necessary. Billy's mother could have made life much easier for us and the Scouts by getting registered and having a background check as soon as possible. We are reasonable and we understand the odds that Billy's mother is anything other than a parent trying to help are very small. However, ignoring very small odds has led to abuse, kidnapping, and other unexpected disasters in other youth programs. Parents can help us protect their children by registering quickly.

Q: Is there a way to identity those who are more likely to be victims?

A 1990 study said 46% of victims are boys by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System Working Paper 1, p. 26

Most abuse against children is committed by males
Girls are more likely to be abused by relatives
Sexual abuse of boys more likely to occur by a non-relative
Prime age for boys being abused by predators is 12

Pedophiles are able within minutes to identify the ones who are vulnerable.

Those abused often are more emotionally vulnerable than others.