

Youth-on-Youth Incidents



SCOUTING U
Learn. Challenge. Lead.™

Youth-on-Youth Incidents

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Background

The Boy Scouts of America places the greatest importance on creating the safest environment possible for our youth members. The organization's leadership has identified a need and has determined that it should provide additional Youth Protection training to professionals, volunteers, and leaders regarding the prevention of youth-on-youth incidents that may occur within the context of Scouting. Although the vast majority of youth enjoy a safe and wholesome experience at camp, negative and dangerous interactions are always possible. We need to be aware of not only the types of abuse that can occur between one or more youth participants but also how to build safeguards into Scout meetings, outings, and other activities to reduce or eliminate incidents. Adult leaders must be prepared so they can prevent and appropriately respond to these incidents.

The BSA's Scouting U has created this informational document with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation for BSA leaders, parents, volunteers, and professionals. This session covers how to prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate youth-on-youth behavior including inappropriate sexual behavior that might occur in any Scouting program. The session is designed to be delivered by the council, district, or unit Youth Protection champion, training chair, district chair, district executives, or other appropriate Scout leaders.

Emphasis has been placed on leader, volunteer, and professional responsibilities to prevent and reduce youth-on-youth incidents from occurring, utilizing established policies and procedures and tools such as the response questionnaire for youth-on-youth incidents, and most importantly, leading by example.

This information and the PowerPoint presentation can be used in the following venues to increase awareness of this element of youth protection:

- Existing facilitator-led Youth Protection training sessions
- Pre-camp leaders' meetings for summer camp and first-time leaders' meetings at all outings
- Roundtables
- Camp schools
- Top Hands
- Scout executives' and district executives' training on responding to youth protection incidents
- Other training events that include the "Youth Protection Training for Volunteer Leaders and Parents" DVD

This material was developed to support professionals as they review youth-on-youth incidents. It is designed for use by adult volunteers and leaders as they review Scouting's Barriers to Abuse and the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and address inappropriate youth-on-youth incidents, with a primary focus on camping and overnight activities. Because of time allowances, Scouting's Barriers to Abuse are referenced here for participant follow-up. If you discover that there needs to be more discussion in this area, it will make an excellent follow-up session at a later date.

Youth-on-Youth Incidents

Time: 15 minutes

Objectives

The overall objective of this course is to improve how leaders prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate youth-on-youth behavior including inappropriate sexual behavior that might occur in any Scouting program.

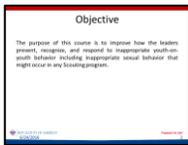
Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
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Introduction



PowerPoint Slides



Abuse does not always fit neatly into one category or a typical pattern or type of behavior. It may cross into multiple areas, including bullying, hazing, physical contact, sexual talk, initiations, games, and exposure to inappropriate materials. It may be a single incident or evolve over several escalating incidents.

This material cannot cover all possible types of incidents. It is important to remember that good judgment, common sense, and placing the safety of the Scout first will always be paramount and your best preventive measure.

Abuse and bad behavior go on everywhere. We cannot be so naïve as to believe it does not affect Scouts or leaders. While 95 percent of abuse happens in the home, Scouting is not immune. We must always be aware of what is happening if we are going to protect our youth.

Youth Protection Begins With You



BSA Policy:

All adult leaders and youth members are responsible for youth protection. Unit leadership is responsible for unit discipline and initial response to all youth protection incidents. This includes preventing, intervening, and responding. In abuse incidents requiring an immediate report to a Scout executive, notification should occur by phone or an immediate message and follow-up with submission of the Volunteer Incident Report form.



Solutions:

- Youth Protection Begins With You—with the leaders setting the tone by:
 - Conducting pre-camp meetings with youth
 - Working with units and youth to develop a unit/camp code of conduct
 - Conducting pre-camp meetings with camp staff on roles and responsibilities in responding to youth protection incidents
 - Setting the example from the beginning
 - Intervening immediately when there is a concern

Youth protection relies upon the shared involvement of everyone in Scouting. This includes volunteers and leaders who create a culture of awareness and safety within their units and councils and ensure their units follow the BSA's Youth Protection policies; parents who monitor and participate in their children's activities and teach them personal safety skills; and Scouting professionals who increase the awareness of BSA Youth Protection policies, make training available to everyone, encourage all Scouting units to include personal safety awareness education in their programs, and enforce Youth Protection policies in all council-sponsored activities. Everyone, including other youth, who becomes aware of possible abuse within Scouting must report any suspicion to the proper authorities for review and investigation.

As leaders, we can help prevent inappropriate youth-on-youth behavior by doing several things. We



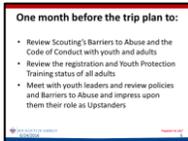
should schedule youth protection discussions and include youth-on-youth issues as a part of that discussion.

When preparing for any extended outing and resident camp or at least once a year, we need to plan:



- **Three months in advance to:**

- Review the *Time to Tell* video facilitated with emphasis on camp/program activity scenarios



- **One month before the trip to:**

- Review Scouting's Barriers to Abuse and the code of conduct with youth and adults
- Review the registration and Youth Protection training status of all adults
- Meet with youth leaders and review policies and Barriers to Abuse and impress upon them their role as upstanders



- **On arrival to:**

- Remind adult and youth leaders to be active observers of applicable risk factors
- Remind youth of the buddy system and their duty to watch out for other Scouts, especially in the latrine, the food line, and while tenting
- Remind youth to bring any behavior or safety concerns to the attention of the Scoutmaster or a trusted adult leader
- Review the code of conduct and lights-out in tents policies



- **During camp and on trips to:**

- Set the example and hold other leaders accountable for doing the same
- Address observed or suspicious behavior immediately
- Insist on full compliance with BSA youth protection and reporting guidelines



As BSA leaders, we can help parents limit the opportunities for violating policies unknowingly by taking a few simple steps. All participating parents should be encouraged to become registered members of the BSA and to take Youth Protection training.

All parents should have reviewed “How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse: A Parent’s Guide.” Confirm with parents at unit gatherings that they have access to this document and have gone through it with their Scout.

And remind adults and youth about Scouting’s Barriers to Abuse, especially the policies of no one-on-one contact and respecting the privacy of others.

“Youth Led” Does Not Mean “Adult Abdicated”



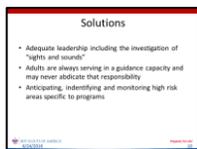
BSA Policy:

Youth leadership is monitored by adult leaders.



Issues:

Youth incidents, damage to property, fights, code violations



Solutions:

- Adequate leadership including the investigation of “sights and sounds”
- Adults are always serving in a guidance capacity and may never abdicate that responsibility
- Anticipating, indentifying, and monitoring high-risk areas specific to programs

It’s important that we remind everyone that youth-on-youth abuse can occur in Scouting during normal activities, especially where observation or adult supervision is limited. This includes overnight activities and events that occur in less-structured environments as well as secluded areas in regular meeting places. Higher risk situations include overnight hotel stays, tenting, camping overnight, and group

latrine and/or showering facilities.

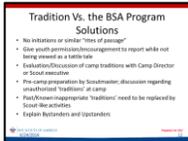
Tradition vs. the BSA Program



BSA Policy:

- No hazing.
- No bullying.
- Discipline must be constructive.
- Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Code of conduct.

Traditions that are unauthorized by the BSA program, the council, and the Scout executive may, in fact, be abuse, harassment, bullying, hazing, initiations, or violations of the Scout Oath, Scout Law, and state law.



Solutions:

- No initiations or similar “rites of passage”
- Give youth permission and encouragement to report while not being viewed as a tattletale
- Evaluation/discussion of camp traditions with camp director or Scout executive
- Pre-camp preparation by Scoutmaster; discussion regarding unauthorized “traditions” at camp
- Past/known inappropriate “traditions” need to be replaced by Scout-like activities
- Explain bystanders and upstanders

Bullying



Bullying is a widespread and serious societal problem that has a negative impact on the “target.” (We do not use the term “victim.”) About a third of sexual abuse occurs at the hands of other children, including older youth and youth in positions of leadership who are able to manipulate or bully others using their size or knowledge difference.

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). It is



not a “phase” youth have to go through. It is not “just messing around,” and is not something youth—bully or target—will “grow out of.” All forms of bullying are prohibited in Scouting. All forms of bullying violate the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

Unfortunately most instances or incidents of abuse of youth are not stopped and go unreported. This occurs for several reasons.

- Fear can play a big role.
- The youth may feel responsible or blame themselves for the abuse or feel that others will see them as weak for “letting” it happen.
- Some youth may have participated in an activity and later regretted it or realized that they were manipulated.

You are the key to creating a safe, bullying-free environment for Scouting youth. Experts say that leaders can usually tell when a youth new to the unit may become a target to be bullied. Individual factors such as temperament, social competence, physical condition (e.g., overweight/underweight), speaking another language at home, special health-care needs, perceived differences (e.g., sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion), or the presence of a disability may put a youth at greater risk of being bullied. Leaders should identify these youth and take measures to help ensure their smooth integration into the unit.

That is why leader intervention is key. Because youth may be reluctant to report abuse, it is important to repeat the key messages, reinforce the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, and encourage youth reporting. A leader’s ability to appreciate risk factors and recognize unusual behavior and symptoms of potentially inappropriate youth-on-youth behavior is key to preventing and responding to potential threats and incidents.

When speaking with a child who discloses or indicates abuse, your role is to become the trusted adult. A good approach includes the following:



- Be an upstander; get involved.
- If you see something, stop it.
- If you know or suspect something, report it.
- If you are not sure, seek advice from someone who is knowledgeable.

If a Scout is bullied because of race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, send an email to youth.protection@Scouting.org.

Group Bullying



Group bullying is different from other bullying and it includes:

- Group/gang bullying (roving bully groups) of youth not in their home unit
- Pushing youth out of meal line
- Pinning, threatening, or molesting youth in bathrooms or shower facilities
- Pantsing, pulling back or down shower curtains

This behavior thrives in the large environment and anonymity of a camp setting. Culprits are difficult to identify due to multiple units unknown to each other.

Solutions:

- This is not Scout-like behavior and may result in immediate removal from camp activities. Severe and/or chronic behavior will be reported to law enforcement
- See it, report it, remove the perpetrators immediately
- Pre-camp meeting to explicitly state behaviors that will not be tolerated
- Emphasis on large buddy groups
- Bystander/upstander responsibility
- Recognize those who report and upstanders
- Require more adult supervision in target areas (latrines, changing areas, showers)

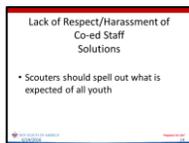


Lack of Respect/Harassment of Co-ed Staff



Unacceptable behavior includes:

- Jokes, smirks, photo taking, pointing, ogling
- Leaders and youth “leering” at others in pools, lakefront, climbing wall areas
- Game such as “Guess what color?” and “ranking” other youth or staff
- Leader comments such as “Females don’t belong at camp” and “Females are inferior counselors.”
- Failure of leadership to prepare youth by setting proper expectations, providing proper examples
- Immature youth in co-ed environment
- Youth not accustomed to being around members of the opposite sex



Solutions:

- Scouters should spell out what is expected of all youth.

Nearly all camp staff today are co-ed. Youth attending camp may not have experienced a resident camp situation with co-ed peers outside of Venturing and Exploring. It’s important that all Scouts understand what is expected of them with regard to their behavior at camp and how to interact with the camp staff.

Inappropriate/Questionable Sexual Activity of Youth



BSA Policy:

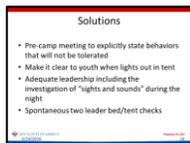
All adult leaders and youth members are responsible for acting in accordance with the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in the Scouting program and may result in revocation of membership.

During adolescence and puberty, young people have a natural, normal curiosity about sex. They are exposed to media that glorifies sexualized and violent behavior and apps designed to make it easy to engage in inappropriate behavior.

Child development experts state most “normal” sexual activity between consenting, same-age youth with no coercion will stop with calm and clear adult intervention and guidance. Simply stated, an adult (leader) directing youth to stop the behavior and not engage in it during Scouting activities will resolve most incidents.

Balancing acceptance of normal adolescent development with questionable or inappropriate activity should be evaluated on an incident-by-incident basis.

Solutions:



- Pre-camp meeting to explicitly state behaviors that will not be tolerated
- Make it clear to youth when lights-out is
- Adequate leadership including the investigation of “sights and sounds” during the night
- Spontaneous two-leader bed or tent checks

If at any time there appears to be abuse, coercion, threats, or forced activity, your responsibility is clear. Common sense and judgment should always apply.

Privacy Invasions of Youth by Youth for Youth Entertainment

Misuse of Cellphone/Tablet Cameras

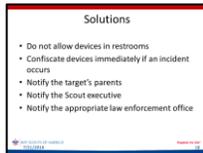


BSA Policy:

Inappropriate use of smartphones, cameras, and imaging or digital devices is prohibited.

This type of behavior includes:

- Youth taking inappropriate pictures of themselves, other Scouts, and staff. Taking and sharing nude photos of a minor is a federal offense in some states and a criminal offense in all states.



Solutions:

- Do not allow devices in restrooms
- Confiscate devices immediately if an incident occurs
- Notify the target's parents
- Notify the Scout executive
- Notify the appropriate law enforcement office

The use of any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in or near shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected is inappropriate.

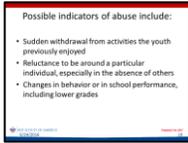
Today's youth are spending more time than ever using digital media for education, research, socializing, and fun. To help families and volunteers keep youth safe while online, the BSA introduced the Cyber Chip.

For more information, please see the BSA's Cyber Chip web page at www.Scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection/CyberChip.aspx.

Identifying Abuse



As a Scout leader, you need to be aware of the signs of abuse. They can be as different as the Scouts you work with.



Each youth's response to abuse is different. Some youth may report immediately; others may not. Possible indicators of abuse include:

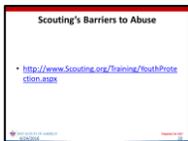
- Sudden withdrawal from activities the youth previously enjoyed
- Reluctance to be around a particular individual, especially in the absence of others
- Changes in behavior or in school performance, including lower grades

Other youth may also provide clues or make unusual statements trying to indicate something is not right. You should always take anything said or observed seriously and follow up. Take rumors or complaints of potentially inappropriate conduct seriously and follow up immediately. Take the opportunity to ask questions with another leader, away from other youth. Check out unusual noises or youth efforts to avoid observation by others.

Scouting's Barriers to Abuse



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



You should make sure that you and those you work with in Scouting are aware of and follow these policies. They can be found at:

<http://www.Scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.asp>
[X](#)

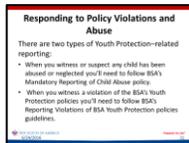
While we are not going to go into detail here, you do need to make sure you read through the Barriers to Abuse and are familiar with all of the policies. You also

need to review and discuss the Barriers to Abuse with your Scouts and adult volunteers on a regular basis.

Responding to Policy Violations and Abuse



There are two types of Youth Protection-related reporting.



When you witness or suspect any child has been abused or neglected, you'll need to follow the BSA's Mandatory Report of Child Abuse policy.

When you witness a violation of the BSA's Youth Protection policies, you'll need to follow the BSA's Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies guidelines.

Mandatory Report of Child Abuse



All persons involved in Scouting must 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, or exposed to any form of sexual exploitation, including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material. No person may abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person. This duty cannot be delegated to any other person. State laws may mandate how and when abuse is reported; local councils should provide that information to all leaders.

Some states may define emotional abuse requiring mandatory reporting to include serious forms of bullying or harassment; be familiar with what your state requires.



Steps to reporting child abuse:

- Ensure the child is in a safe environment.
- In cases of child abuse or medical emergencies, call 911 immediately. In addition, if the suspected abuser

is in the Scout's family, you are required to contact your local hotline.

- Notify the Scout executive or his or her designee during his or her absence.

Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies



If you have reason to believe any of the BSA's Youth Protection policies, including those described within Scouting' Barriers to Abuse, have been violated, you must notify your local council Scout executive so he or she may take appropriate action for the safety of our Scouts.