Why Launch a Safe Scouting Champion?

When people ask why each local council should have a volunteer Safe Scouting Champion, the answer is twofold:

First, the Boy Scouts of America is, at its core, a volunteer-led organization. Volunteers make our program happen, and it is vital that all leaders understand our commitment to health and safety as well as youth protection—functions that now work together under our national Safe Scouting Support Committee. So really, we need volunteers to make our Scouting program happen AND happen safely!

However, even experienced leaders may find it challenging to know everything about the programs their youth want to enjoy and all of the current guidance in the Guide to Safe Scouting. We work to make it easier with memory tools like the Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety. Learning all the safety details of our extensive program can be a daunting task for leaders and parents. This is where the Safe Scouting Champions come in as a resource for all in Scouting.

Second, the safety of our Scouts is NOT a support role. It is the primary responsibility of all the leaders and parents running our program. Sure, our programs are fun, adventurous, and challenging. Young ladies and young men would not be attracted to them if they weren’t! But the parents of our Scouting families would not entrust their children to our volunteer leaders if the program was not known to be conducted in a safe manner.

Safe Scouting Champion volunteers should be in place at all levels of the Scouting movement where there are other volunteers! Safe Scouting Champions are the informed resource to Scouters who are leading our program. They stay informed about the contents of the Guide to Safe Scouting and the changes to it that come from our safety experts.

The prominence of the Safe Scouting Champion in a council’s hierarchy reflects the importance that the council’s Key 3 and board place on safety. This person is an advocate for youth protection, safe programs, and health and safety requirements. Safe Scouting Champions team up with commissioners, trainers, council Health and Safety committees, and council leaders to promote continuous learning about safe practices and safety policies. Unit leaders are busy people. On top of family and professional responsibilities, they have volunteered to work with our terrific Scouts. They deserve the support of unit, district, and council committees, and they deserve an informed volunteer encouraging them to conduct our program in the safest manner!

Resource

www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/yp-champions
Wilderness First Aid—What’s New?
BSA Wilderness First Aid Scenarios

Many people who become certified in BSA Wilderness First Aid (WFA) comment after the course that they value the hands-on skills practice and feel that it is the most important component. By incorporating wilderness first aid skills in an outdoor scenario, students are able to practice physical assessments, give care, formulate plans, and work through potential problems in a safe environment.

Practicing wilderness first-aid skills in a hands-on environment helps to

- Reinforce the training
- Significantly increase retention
- Improve critical thinking
- Instill confidence in handling medical issues that could be encountered in the outdoors

WFA scenarios will soon be available on the BSA WFA webpage

Although WFA scenario practice has been incorporated into the BSA WFA curriculum from the start, instructors were previously left to develop their own scenarios. Many have suggested scenarios should be developed specific to Scouting. We heard their comments and did just that! WFA scenarios will soon be available on the BSA WFA webpage. There are many to choose from, including everything from single victims with minor wounds to multiple-patient scenarios. WFA instructors can pick scenarios based on the specific needs of their students and help them to be prepared for their next adventure!

Check the BSA WFA webpage for the new scenarios when planning your next course: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa/

Gaga Ball

A fun activity enjoyed by many Scouts in council camps and district events is gaga ball. However, this fast and furious game can quickly lead to someone getting injured if everyone doesn’t “play by the rules.”

Before offering gaga ball at any event, develop a program hazard analysis (PHA) that camp or activity planners will use to review the game and the possible injuries that could occur for players. The PHA should include a list of rules to follow. For example, Scouts of similar age should play against each other; younger Scouts should never play against older Scouts, as those Scouts may play rougher.

There have been a number of incidents playing gaga ball. The Safe Scouting Support Committee suggests that camps and activity planners review the BSA Incident Review sheet on the game, which can be found on the Scouting Safely website: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report/incident-reviews/gaga-ball/
Using the Campout Checklist

Camping is a long-honored tradition for many families, including the BSA family. As summer approaches and everyone starts planning campouts, be sure to start a campout checklist. It will help you establish your schedule, supplies, and location ahead of time so you can make the most of your camping experience.

There may have been times when you overthought or underestimated your needs for a camping trip, but with good planning there are many ways to enjoy the adventure, fun, discovery, and teamwork involved. Using the BSA Campout Safety Checklist will help to ensure these aspects of camping are accomplished while also keeping you safe.

Camping can be enjoyable in almost any outdoor setting—from the backcountry to summer camp and national high-adventure bases, to name a few. In deciding on a camping trip, you need to consider who, what, where, when, how, and why.

The Campout Safety Checklist will help you cover each of the following:

- **Planning.** Planning is important. Become familiar with your campsite location and do some research about the weather, licensing/permit requirements, and project or activity guidelines so you can be prepared.

- **Equipment.** Plan for vehicles involved or tools necessary for your camping experience. Also consider trailer requirements and first-aid or emergency kits.

- **Emergency Planning.** A prepared Scout is a confident Scout. Keep a cell phone handy as well as a list of local authorities (fire department, police, hospitals, etc.) in case an emergency occurs, such as inclement weather or a lost Scout. If you are in the backcountry, canyons, or a remote location, coverage may be one to two hours away. A GPS tracking/messaging device is helpful in these locations; for more information on personal locator beacons (PLBs) and satellite messengers, visit [www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com).

- **Program.** Know your program. There should be age-appropriate activities, safety equipment, proper supervision, and a discussion on potential hazards.

**Resources**

- [Campout Safety Checklist](#)
- [Guide to Safe Scouting, “Camping”](#)
As a means of making the program safer for all participants, the Boy Scouts of America continues to require the use of an Annual Health and Medical Record (AHMR) for all members. The form has two levels of completion, depending on the duration and intensity of activity.

**Parts A and B, required for all**—All participants are required to complete and submit *Part A: Informed Consent, Release Agreement, and Authorization* and *Part B: General Information/Health History*. Parts A and B provide the basis of safe Scouting in the unit and for shorter term (less than 72-hour) events and activities. These two components can be completed at home by a parent or guardian and do not require a visit to a medical provider.

**Part C, required for experiences of 72 or more hours**—Those who will experience a summer camp or other outdoor activity of 72 hours or more are also required to complete *Part C: Pre-Participation Physical*. This component requires completion by a health-care provider (an M.D., D.O., nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant) and must include a physical examination and a statement by the provider that the participant is able to participate in the Scouting experience.

**Risk advisory statements**—To aid the provider and parent/participant, the BSA Medical Task Force, in conjunction with experts and the BSA’s four high adventure bases, has provided risk advisory statements for each of the high adventure bases. These documents are designed to help everyone understand the physical demands of the experience. It is important to note that all four high adventure bases will, if necessary, prevent participants from leaving the base camp if a participant is not medically capable of experiencing the trek or adventure. Using the risk advisory statement before arriving at the base can help avoid a disastrous return home. Local councils may also prepare and use risk advisories for local camps and programs to make sure participants are prepared for any special conditions that may exist.

**Availability**—The AHMR is available only from the BSA national website (www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/). This ensures that all are using the most current form since no other forms can be accepted. The website also provides the correct form and the appropriate risk advisory statement if one is needed.

**Privacy**—Maintaining the privacy of all participants is the responsibility of the adult or adults charged with receiving, handling, and storing the participants’ completed AHMRs. Paper copies of the documents should be held in a sealed envelope or other secured carrier and removed only for use by a medical provider or given to the camp health officer. Because some states require the camp to keep the AHMR after the participant leaves camp, a copy of the form should be maintained by the unit and parent or guardian. For the safety and privacy of all, it is not permissible to electronically scan or electronically save the completed AHMR except as directed for a national BSA event when private storage and transmission has been provided.

**Resources**

The BSA has an extensive FAQ and a Safety Moment sheet providing education and details on the AHMR to leaders, parents/guardians, and participants. These are available on the BSA website at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/medical-formfaqs/ and www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/. Both resources are especially useful when new families enter the program and may be confused or concerned.
Online Access to Safety Materials

Do you sometimes wonder where to get BSA safety information and material? The answer is on the BSA website, www.scouting.org. In 2018, there were 51,355 downloads of the *Guide to Safe Scouting* on the website. Compare that to the 5,319 copies of the printed version sold in the same year, and you can see that the favored method today is downloading.

How about the number of times safety information was viewed at Scouting.org? There were 522,501 views of the *Guide to Safe Scouting* HTML version and, of that number, 407,032 were unique views (from individual visitors), with an average time on the page of 2:02 minutes. In some areas, the viewing time was longer. People spent more time online reading the webpages on aquatics, Scouting’s Barriers to Abuse, and camping, and the medical sections; for those, an average of more than three minutes was spent per page.

If you haven’t yet ventured to the BSA website, try it today by going to www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/.

You will find an almost endless variety of safety materials, from the *Guide to Safe Scouting* to Safety Moments, Health and Safety Alerts, Youth Protection, and much more.

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Save the Date

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 29–31, 2019</td>
<td>National Annual Meeting</td>
<td>Gaylord Rockies Resort &amp; Convention Center, Aurora, Colorado</td>
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<td>July 15–20, 2019</td>
<td>Energize Your Enterprise Risk Management Committee</td>
<td>Philmont Training Center</td>
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<td>July 22–Aug. 2, 2019</td>
<td>24th World Scout Jamboree</td>
<td>Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve, West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 15–21, 2019</td>
<td>Wilderness First Aid Instructor Trainer Development Course</td>
<td>Philmont Training Center</td>
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<td>September 25–29, 2019</td>
<td>National Outdoor Conference with ERM/Safe Scouting track</td>
<td>Philmont Scout Ranch</td>
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