

# Camp Leadership— Youth Protection Begins With You™

A Guide for Camp Staff



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

## Introduction

One of the most rewarding experiences in Scouting is to serve on staff at a BSA camp. Few employment settings offer such a unique opportunity to serve in responsible positions that combine the teaching of important skills to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturers, and Varsity Scouts with tremendous personal growth experiences.

Part of your camp staff responsibility is to be alert to any activities or conditions that could threaten the safety of campers. When any threat to the safety of campers is detected, the staff member must inform the camp director or another designated senior staff member as soon as possible.

One of the areas for which camp staff must be on the alert is child abuse. Child abuse affects all segments of our society and may happen wherever children are found—even in Scouting. Child abuse is never acceptable, and child abusers are subject to legal consequences. Camp staff members are the eyes and ears of the camp and, as such, have an essential role in preventing abuse in camp as well as in helping Scouts when they have been abused—wherever the abuse occurred.

This brochure will help BSA camp staff members be prepared to fulfill their youth protection responsibilities.


## BSA Youth Protection Policies

The Boy Scouts of America believes that its top priority is to protect the safety of children. The BSA has developed “Barriers to Abuse Within Scouting” that create safer environments for young people involved in Scouting activities. All Scout leaders must comply with these policies. Violations of these policies put Scouts at risk and will result in disciplinary action, including expulsion from camp and revocation of membership. All camp staff members are required to understand these policies and report any suspected violations as directed by the camp director.

- Two-deep leadership
- No one-on-one contact
- Respect of privacy
- Separate accommodations
- No secret organizations
- Appropriate attire
- Constructive discipline
- Youth leader training and supervision
- Member responsibility
- Unit responsibilities
- Prohibition of hazing
- Prohibition of bullying

Physical contact between adults and youth should be kept to a minimum. Using common sense, it is acceptable to shake hands, pat a boy on the back, or touch when demonstrating or teaching a skill, such as first aid, or when taking action to prevent an accident. Giving long hugs or massages, or wrestling are examples of inappropriate contact with a child.

All campers are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, ethnic slurs, crude or



sexual jokes, pornography, demeaning behavior, and drugs and alcohol have no place in Scouting and may result in discipline up to, and including, the revocation of membership.

### **Cameras and Imaging Devices**

Although most campers, leaders, and staff members use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade the privacy of individuals. It is inappropriate—and may be a violation of the law—to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants. If camp staff is made aware of this violation, then staff members should immediately confiscate the camera or device and turn it over to the camp director.

### **Social Media**

Social media, such as text messages, e-mail, and community and personal websites and blogs are all popular forms of communication. However, camp staff members are representatives of the BSA and must be especially careful how they use these and other forms of communication. Under no circumstance should you discuss or transmit personal or inappropriate information with a camper, leader, or another staff member. Not only can these forms of communication be misinterpreted, they can also be widely dispersed. It is even possible that such postings will resurface many years later, resulting in embarrassment.




## **Camp Staff Conduct**



Although camp staff members are often only slightly older than campers, they must conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. Staff members are role models for young and impressionable campers. Because staff members are also members of the “camp community” for the summer, they must adhere to a code of conduct that promotes a safe and healthy environment for all. This applies whether on or off-duty. The Scout Oath and Scout Law are excellent guidelines for conduct in all settings.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Another area of interpersonal relationships that camp staff members need to avoid is **sexual harassment**. Sexual harassment occurs when a member of the camp staff uses verbal or nonverbal communication to create a “hostile environment” by focusing on the sexuality of another person or the person’s gender, and the attention is unwanted or unwelcome and is severe or pervasive enough to affect a person’s work environment. Examples of sexual harassment include telling sexually explicit stories or showing sexually oriented pictures that cause other staff members’ discomfort. Another form of sexual harassment in camp might include attempting to barter promotions and special privileges for sexual favors. The first step in addressing sexual harassment would be to confront the wrongdoer and inform him or her that the behavior is not wanted and ask for the behavior to stop. The next step would be to report specific objectionable behaviors to the supervisor and request that the supervisor intervene.



Camp staff will receive specific instructions concerning the following:

- The camp's policies for reporting suspected or alleged abuse
- Guidelines for personal behavior, including the appropriate use of technology
- Policies for fraternization and relationships with campers
- Expectations for social relationships among staff when on- or off-duty
- Policies on bullying and sexual harassment
- Policies on discipline
- Social media policy

## Recognizing and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

### Definition of Child Abuse

Each state has a legal definition of child abuse. The U.S. Congress has defined child abuse as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.” This definition encompasses physical, sexual, and emotional mistreatment as well as child neglect.

### Types of Abuse

The following are signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional mistreatment. It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination rather than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally mistreated as well, and a sexually mistreated child might also be neglected.

### Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

More important than determining a specific definition of abuse is learning how to detect abuse. Children cope with abuse differently; some children will not show any outward signs of abuse. However, when signs of abuse are present, there may be behavioral indicators or physical signs. Common indicators of child abuse and neglect include when the **child**:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to camp or other activities early and/or stays late and does not want to go home

**Note: Although some children showing some of these signs may not have been abused, they may still need help.**

### Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the caregivers and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting or unconvincing explanations, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

### Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

### Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participation in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Has a sexually transmitted disease
- Chronically runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

### Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has considered or attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Consider the possibility of emotional mistreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver:**

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

Each camp has a reporting policy for staff members to follow. All suspected abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement or child protective services agency for investigation. Suspected child abuse must be reported **immediately** to the camp director or designated senior staff member and the Scout executive. **Staff should not confront suspected abusers or accuse them of child abuse.** The report to the camp director should be made as soon as possible. **Camp staff members should not discuss suspicions or allegations with other staff members except with the camp director or designated senior staff member.** Reporting child abuse or violations of the BSA's Youth Protection policies is not being a "tattle-tale." Reporting suspected violations and abuse will help prevent harm to a Scout and possibly many other children.

### **Meeting the Needs of Child Abuse Victims**

At some point, a camper may confide in you or tell you that he has been abused.

- DON'T panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the child.
- DON'T criticize the child.
- DON'T promise not to tell anyone. You must report the allegation to the camp director or designated senior staff member.
- DO listen intently and obey the no one-on-one contact policy.
- DO respect the child's privacy. Keep the information confidential and share it only with the camp director, Scout executive, and official agencies.
- DO make sure the child feels that he or she is not to blame.

### **Sexual Molestation by Adults**

Child molesters are the people who sexually abuse and exploit children. They are usually not strangers but are most often adults or other juveniles who were trusted and known to or by the children they victimize. The BSA Youth Protection policies are designed to help you detect inappropriate behavior of molesters.

There are several methods child molesters use to persuade children to give in to molestation. Although force is used in a few cases, molesters most often use a "grooming" process. The grooming process is usually focused on the child's needs and vulnerabilities, but may often focus on the child's parents as well. The molester might offer the parents free babysitting services or make friends with them to gain their trust to be alone with the child.

Characteristically, the grooming process with the child will begin with seeming innocent touching, such as nonsexual hugging, patting the back, and massaging the neck. The molester usually seeks a child who needs affection or attention and makes that child feel special by spending a lot of time with him or her and giving gifts and money. The goal of this extra attention is to build the child's (and parents') trust. When the molester

senses that the child has been sufficiently conditioned to the physical contact and has an emotional bond, the physical contact becomes more intrusive. The contact may be under the guise of sex education or playing inappropriate games. It may prey on the child's emerging curiosity about sexuality or allow the targeted victim taboo access, i.e., violating rules, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes—all to create a “special relationship.” Photography is often used, perhaps under the ruse of having the child pose for pictures. Molesters are skilled at manipulating children by incorporating the child's ambitions into their strategies.

When an adult looks for opportunities to spend a lot of time alone with a child, attempts to isolate the child, or lavishes gifts and/or money on a child for no apparent reason, the child's camp staff members need to intervene.

### **Sexual Molestation by Other Youth**

Approximately one-third of sexual molestation occurs at the hands of other children. Youth four to seven years older might manipulate the target victim with coercion, size, or knowledge difference. If a child tells you about club initiations, gangs, the use of intimidation or coercion, or bullying in which sexual activity is included or if a child tells you about inappropriate sexual activity by other children, whether by deception, pressure, or force, this is a form of sexual abuse and you need to take steps to stop the activity by reporting it to the camp director. This form of sexual misconduct is serious and cannot be ignored.

Children who molest other children need professional help. This activity is not just “kids being kids.” It must be stopped and reported immediately to the camp director and Scout executive.

### **Youth Protection Strategies for Youth Members**

The Boy Scouts of America has developed age-appropriate personal safety messages for our youth. For Cub Scout-aged children, we stress the Four Rules for Personal Safety. For older youth members, we teach the “three R's” of personal safety.

The Four Rules of Personal Safety encourage Cub Scout-age children to seek adult help in making personal safety decisions. The rules are:

1. Check first with a parent or another trusted adult before changing plans or accepting anything from anyone.
2. Go with a friend in order to be safer and to have more fun. For Cub Scouts, the friend should be a parent, another trusted adult, or an older child approved by the parents.
3. It is my body, and I have the right to say “no” to anyone who tries to touch me in places covered by my swimming suit or to do things that I think are wrong.
4. Tell a trusted adult whenever I am hurt, scared, or made to feel uncomfortable.

### **Three R's of Personal Safety**

- **Recognize** that anyone could be a child molester and be aware of situations that could lead to abuse.
- **Resist** advances made by child molesters to avoid being molested.
- **Report** molestation or attempted molestation to a trusted adult.

## Bullying

Bullying always involves one person or group trying to intimidate a target (victim)—often repeatedly. It might involve a physical act: hitting, kicking, biting, or shoving. It might also involve verbal or emotional abuse: teasing, put-downs, name-calling, hazing, hurtful joking, or intimidation. Bullies also sometimes use racial or sexual slurs or make threatening gestures.

Bullying usually takes place out of the sight of adults. As a result, boys frequently don't show how much bullying upsets them and often remain silent. The bully often threatens reprisals for "telling." The victim also may think adults won't or can't help him, or he may feel ashamed for not defending himself.

Bullying is not a "right of passage" or simply part of growing up. The fear and anxiety of bullying causes kids to not only avoid bullies but also the places where they hang out, including camp activities. And far from "toughening up" targets of bullying, bullying can devastate their self-esteem and self-confidence. If the behavior continues, the victim may suffer long-lasting feelings of isolation and sadness—even depression. Bullying even affects groups, as other members might wonder if they will be the next targets.

Bullying in all forms is prohibited in Scouting.

### Steps to Stop Bullying in a Camp Setting

- Camp staff should be on the lookout for bullying behavior, especially when Scouts are away from their established unit leadership.
- Stop the actions and protect the target from danger.
- Identify the behavior in a calm tone and say that it's not OK.
- Speak with the target.
- Encourage the target to tell his or her parents and Scout leaders.
- Tell the camp director or designated senior staff member of the bullying incident.

To reduce the likelihood of bullying in a camp setting, create an anti-bullying culture throughout camp by always modeling mutual respect, kindness, and inclusion and never solving problems through aggression. If campers and leaders see staff leading camp in an intimidating way and yelling to control situations, then that behavior could be repeated at the troop site. Instead, model positive feedback and demonstrate how to connect constructively with one another.

**For more information, and resources on Youth Protection, go to MyScouting and click on the Youth Protection page.**



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