

Boy Scouts of America
Youth Protection Guidelines for Adult Venturing Leaders
Training Guide

Introduction

Both individual and groups of adult Venturing leaders may use this video to learn about the BSA's youth protection guidelines for the Venturing program. We recommend that you make notes and jot down any questions that you have while viewing the video. Your questions can be part of the discussion if you are part of a group training session. If you are an individual watching the video, you may want to ask your district or council representative any questions you have.

The Venturing program is the young adult, high adventure program of the Boy Scouts of America. It is co-educational and includes young people from 14 through 20 years of age. Developmentally speaking this age range truly spans the transition period from childhood to adulthood.

This training video highlights four different, yet concurrent, areas of adolescent development. The areas are:

1. Movement toward independence.
2. Future interests and mental ability.
3. Social relationships.
4. Morals, values, and self-direction.

As you view the video listen for the answers to the following questions:

1. How do adolescents' curiosities about "adult experiences" contribute to their level of risk?
2. What developmental area may lead to conflict between youths, their parents and other authority figures?
3. Should young adolescents be expected to be as aware of "cause-effect relationships" as older adolescents are?
4. Would you expect 17- or 18-year-olds to "hang-out" with 14- or 15-year-olds?
5. How might peer groups influence the behavior of individual teenagers?
6. What developmental factors tend to increase an adolescent's susceptibility to sexual exploitation?
7. How can a strong self-image help to protect adolescents from sexual exploitation?
8. How should you respond when a teenage appears to be depressed for several days and talks about life not being worth living?
9. Who should you contact when you suspect that a member of the Venturing crew has been sexually molested during a Venturing activity?
10. What is the term used by the BSA to characterize inappropriate social relationships between youth members and adult leaders?

Youth Protection Guidelines for Venturing

1. Any suspected case of sexual misconduct in the Venturing program should be reported to the council Scout executive (or his designated representative) immediately. The Scout executive will initiate contact with the appropriate investigative agencies and offer assistance to the victim and victim's family.
2. Two-deep leadership is required on all Venturing trips and outings. This is a minimum requirement and additional supervision may be necessary depending on the nature of the activities and the size of the group. When the activity is coeducational, adults of both sexes must accompany it, one of whom must be registered as an adult member of the BSA.
3. One-to-one contact between adults and youth crewmembers is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting should be conducted in view of others.
4. Males and females are required to have separate latrines, bathing and sleeping accommodations. If it becomes necessary to share any facilities, special care should be taken to prevent violations of personal privacy.
5. Adult leaders should respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing into swimming suits or taking showers; intruding only to the extent required for the health and safety of crew members. Adult leaders should protect their own privacy in these situations.
6. During Venturing trips and outings, adult leaders may not sleep in the same quarters as youth members except when the adult is the parent or guardian of the youth.
7. Proper attire is to be worn for all Venturing activities. "Skinny dipping" is never appropriate as part of a BSA activity.
8. Proper equipment and safety procedures are required for all Venturing activities. Care must be taken to ensure that no crewmember is coerced into activities for which he or she is not adequately prepared.
9. Initiations and physical hazing are prohibited and may be not included in any BSA authorized activity. No secret organizations are authorized as part of Venturing or any Scouting program.
10. The roles of volunteer adult leaders in the Venturing program require that clear boundaries be established between adult leaders and youth members. For this reason, fraternization – the formation of peer-based, social relationships between adult and youth members – is not permitted. This prohibition extends to Venturing crewmembers who register as adults after their twenty-first birthday.

11. Discipline used in Venturing should be constructive and reflect Venturing's values. The use of corporal punishment in any form (spanking, slapping, hitting, belt-lines, etc.) is prohibited. If a crewmember behaves in ways to interfere with the crew's operation he or she may be suspended from the program. Many Venturing crews develop "Codes of Conduct" that establish their own boundaries for acceptable behavior. Crew members are more likely to obey rules if they help to develop them.

Crewmember Materials

The Venturing program has a series of three videotaped vignettes, each depicting a specific youth protection concern. These are designed to be shown to crewmembers to stimulate discussion about the topics. These three vignettes address:

- Sexual Harassment
- Date Rape
- Internet Safety and Stalking

Discussion guides are provided for each.

Responses to Discussion Questions

1. How do adolescents' curiosities about "adult experiences" contribute to their level of risk?
Adolescents' natural curiosity about sex, use of alcohol and drugs and other activities that are labeled "adult" often leads to experimentation. It may also provide an opportunity to individuals who will attempt to use this curiosity to manipulate an adolescent for illicit purposes.
2. What developmental area may lead to conflict between youths, their parents and other authority figures?
Youths seeking to establish their independence may be likely to vigorously resist boundaries set by their parents or other authority figures.
3. Should young adolescents be expected to be as aware of "cause-effect relationships" as older adolescents are?
Younger adolescents tend to live more for the moment and as such as not going to be sensitive to cause-effect relationships as older adolescents should be.
4. Would you expect 17-or 18-year-olds to "hang-out" with 14-or 15-year-olds?
In general you would not expect to see older adolescents hanging out with groups of younger adolescents. The exception would be when a dating relationship develops between an older boy and younger girl.
5. How might peer groups influence the behavior of individual teenagers?
Peer groups are perhaps the most influential force shaping the behavior of its individual members. Peer groups influence the clothing styles, musical tastes, hair styles, etc. If

smoking is an acceptable norm in the peer group, chances are its members will all be smokers.

6. What developmental factors tend to increase an adolescent's susceptibility to sexual exploitation?

As mentioned in the first discussion question, curiosity about adult experiences is one factor contributing to adolescents' susceptibility to sexual exploitation. In addition, the use of experimentation as a learning behavior also contributes to their risk of sexual exploitation as well as their naiveté.

7. How can a strong self-image help to protect adolescents from sexual exploitation?
Strong self-images give adolescents a sense of who they are as individuals. They do not need to participate in dangerous activities in order to gain acceptance.

8. How should you respond when a teenager appears to be depressed for several days and talks about life not being worth living?
Anytime a teen talks about life not being worth living, the adults in that teen's life need to respond. An initial response might be talking to the teenager and identifying your concern. For example, you could say, "I am really concerned when I hear you say that you don't believe that life is worth living. Can you tell me what's happening in your life that causes you such pain?" To follow-up, you can ask if the teen has talked to a counselor, spiritual advisor, parent or other trusted adult about the problems. Let the teen know that you are there for him or her and offer to help them seek help.

9. Who should you contact when you suspect that a member of the Venturing crew has been sexually molested during a Venturing activity?
Anytime you suspect that a youth member of the Venturing crew has been sexually molested during a Venturing (or Scouting) activity, you must contact the scout executive. He will see to it that the proper authorities are contacted and also extend assistance to the victim of the molestation.

10. What is the term used by the BSA to characterize inappropriate social relationships between youth members and adult leaders?
The term the BSA uses to describe inappropriate social relationships between youth members and adult leaders is "fraternization." Fraternization is prohibited including preexisting social relationships between adult leaders and crew members when a crew member turns 21 and registers as an adult.