

Camp Leadership— Youth Protection Begins With You™

A Guide for Camp Staff



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

Camp Staffers

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, Scouts BSA, Venturers, Sea Scouts, Explorers, and STEM 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 intervene to stop the inappropriate behavior immediately and 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 youth are found, including in the home or 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's top priority is to protect the safety of youth. The BSA has developed "Barriers to Abuse" 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, enforce the 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
- Buddy system
- No secret organizations
- Appropriate attire
- Constructive discipline
- Youth leader training and supervision
- Member responsibility
- Unit responsibilities
- Prohibition of hazing
- Prohibition of bullying

All camp staff are required to be current on all required training. For the most up-to-date, single source of information on youth protection, health and safety, and safe Scouting policies, refer to the *Guide to Safe Scouting* at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.

Inappropriate public displays of affection are prohibited in Scouting. Physical contact between adults and youth should be kept to a minimum. Using common sense, it is acceptable to shake hands, pat a youth on the back, fist bump, 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 youth.

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.

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, sexual activity, 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, Imaging Devices, Cell Phones, Drones, etc.

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, 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, email, 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.

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. If you are uncomfortable speaking to the wrongdoer, report directly to the supervisor.

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
- Public displays of affection
- Policies prohibiting inappropriate relationships with youth
- Expectations for social relationships among staff when on- or off-duty
- Policies on bullying and sexual harassment
- Policies on discipline
- Social media policy
- And more

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 youth, for example, is often emotionally mistreated as well, and a sexually mistreated youth 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. Youth cope with abuse differently; some 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 **youth**:

- 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: Child abuse and neglect are difficult to identify. Keep in mind that what you are seeing may only be one piece of the puzzle. Trust your instincts. If you are unsure about what you have seen, it is always safest to report.

Signs of Physical Abuse

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

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has bruises or other marks in various stages of healing
- 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 youth's injury
- Describes the youth as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the youth
- Has a history of abuse as a youth

Signs of Neglect

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

- 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 **youth**:

- 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, another youth, or another adult caregiver

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

- Is unduly protective of the youth or severely limits the youth's contact with other youth
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

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

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other youth, 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 youth
- Is unconcerned about the youth and refuses to consider offers of help for the youth's problems
- Overtly rejects the youth

Sexual Abuse by Adults

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

Grooming

There are several methods child abusers use to persuade youth 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 youth's needs and vulnerabilities but may often focus on the youth'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 youth.

Characteristically, the grooming process with the youth will begin with seeming innocent touching, such as nonsexual hugging, patting the back, and massaging the neck. The molester usually seeks a youth who needs affection or attention and makes that youth 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 youth's (and parents') trust. When the molester senses that the youth 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 youth's emerging curiosity about sexuality or allow the targeted victim taboo access, i.e., violating rules, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, viewing pornography—all to create a "special relationship." Photography is often used, perhaps under the ruse of having the youth pose for pictures. Abusers are skilled at manipulating youth by incorporating the youth's ambitions into their strategies.

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

Sexual Molestation by Other Youth

Approximately one-third of sexual molestation occurs at the hands of other youth. Older youth might manipulate the target victim with coercion, size, or knowledge difference. If a youth tells you about club initiations, gangs, the use of intimidation or coercion, or bullying in which sexual activity is included or if a youth tells you about inappropriate sexual activity by other youth, 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.

Youth who molest other youth need professional help. This activity is not just "kids being kids." It must be stopped and reported immediately.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

Each camp has a reporting policy for staff members to follow. All suspected abuse must be reported to the appropriate law enforcement or child protective services agency for investigation. Suspected child abuse must also be reported **immediately** to the camp director or designated senior staff member and the Scout executive. If the camp director, designee, or Scout executive is not available, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

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 required. Reporting suspected violations and abuse will help prevent harm to a Scout and possibly many other youth.

Meeting the Needs of Child Abuse Victims

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

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

Bullying

Bullying 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: hurtful 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 and girls 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 her, or may feel ashamed for not defending himself or herself.

Bullying is not a "rite of passage" or simply part of growing up. The fear and anxiety of bullying causes kids to avoid not only 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. Help us create a bullying-free environment.

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 resources about bullying, please see:

BSA Youth Protection: www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection

Bullying Awareness: www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection/bullying

Cyberbullying Research Center: cyberbullying.us

NetSmartz Workshop: www.netsmartz.org

StopBullying.gov: www.stopbullying.gov

For more information, and resources on Youth Protection, go to www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection and *Guide to Safe Scouting* at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss.



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