

Our Ongoing Commitment to Keeping Scouts Safe



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

The safety and protection of children is the most important priority of the Boy Scouts of America.

We sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in our programs. We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to abuse innocent children. We believe victims, we support them, and we encourage them to come forward. We pay for unlimited counseling by a provider of their choice, and we believe in fairly and equitably compensating them.

The BSA's mandatory reporting policy requires that all persons involved in Scouting report to local authorities any good-faith suspicion or belief that any youth participant is being, or has been, physically or sexually abused. This policy empowers all in the Scouting community to recognize, respond, and report abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting policy that removes perpetrators from Scouting and reports them to law enforcement, the BSA has established a multi-layered process of safeguards, including the following, all of which help to act as barriers to abuse:

- Ongoing mandatory youth-protection training for all volunteers, along with educational materials for parents and Scouts that is prominently featured in handbooks and integrated into our programs;
- A formal leader selection process that includes criminal background checks and other screening efforts;
- A leadership policy that requires at least two youth-protection trained adults be present with youth at all times, and prohibits one-on-one situations where adults would have any interactions alone with children – either in person, online, or via text;
- A 24/7 Scouts First Helpline (1-844-SCOUTS1 or 1-844-726-8871) and email contact address (scouts1st@scouting.org) to access counseling and help needed to report any suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior; and
- The Volunteer Screening Database, a tool the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends for all youth-serving organizations, to prevent individuals that were removed from Scouting from re-registering.

The BSA regularly convenes leaders from other youth-serving organizations, together with survivors and experts from law enforcement, child safety, psychology, youth protection, and other relevant fields, to ensure our policies consistently reflect the latest best practices and to share prevention techniques to ensure children are kept safe. The sharing of information is one of the key focus areas of those discussions. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in six boys and one in four girls will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old. This is an unacceptable public health and safety problem that must be addressed, and the BSA seeks to be part of the solution together with all other youth-serving organizations.

In fact, the BSA strongly supports the following efforts to help keep children safe nationwide, including:

- Funding the CDC study to update the guidelines that all organizations should consider in determining how to keep children in their programs safe;
- Establishing and funding a national system where volunteers can register and be cleared through a common screening process applicable to all states and organizations, with an affordable process for conducting background checks and periodically renewing the clearance to reduce the risk that potential abusers can gain access to children by moving across state lines or to other youth-serving organizations;
- Enabling youth-serving organizations to share information about individuals who have been removed from their programs for alleged inappropriate conduct – even if the individuals have not been arrested or convicted – to keep potential abusers out of these organizations; and
- Strengthening mandatory reporting laws and requiring that sex abuse offenders serve full sentences.