

Youth Ethics and Protection Policy



Outdoor Service Guides

Scouting for Everybody!

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Reviews and Approvals

This policy was drafted by the Outdoor Service Guides Safety Committee (led by Chuck Ehrismann) and reviewed and revised by Safety Committee members and members of the Board of Directors. Personnel writing and reviewing this policy included those with law enforcement and military experience, a prosecuting attorney, educators, a physician, a nurse, and a counselor/psychologist.

The policy was submitted for formal legal review by Susan Pesznecker on 7 August 2017. It was reviewed by attorney David Lawson (Davis Wright Tremaine LLP; Seattle, WA) on 9 August 2017 and was given his full approval.

The policy was reviewed and approved as-is by the Outdoor Service Guides Board of Directors on 11 August 2017.

The Electronic Communications Addendum was approved by majority vote of the OSG Board of Directors on 8 May, 2020.



Introduction

Outdoor Service Guides takes youth protection seriously, and all members must be aware of our relevant policies. Our shared responsibility begins with reading and understanding the OSG policies dealing with youth protection and our ethical practices. It continues with learning about what child abuse is, how it happens, and our responsibility in identifying and reporting it. Finally, it finds us putting these practices into action. Together, these steps make up our Youth Protection Training program.

It's important to note that child abusers will always take advantage of our ignorance. The better we know and understand how to identify the signs and different forms of child abuse, and the more comfortable we are with our role in both preventing and reporting abuse, the better we'll be able to safeguard our youth. Discussion of these policies should be ongoing, upfront, and frequent. Both adult leaders and parents/guardians should be knowledgeable in the policies and practices of OSG.

Definition of Youth Protection

"Youth protection" refers to the responsibility of all organization members¹ and leaders to provide a sanctuary of safety for our youth members through knowledge, conscious action, prevention, and reporting.

All adults in Outdoor Service Guides are organization members, but not all organization members are youth leaders. For example, an adult may register as a Rover but may not be involved in leading or working with youth.

How Is Youth Protection Training Implemented and Applied?

The *OSG Youth Ethics and Protection Policy* should be reviewed by all adult members (18 and over) at the time they join the organization and at least annually thereafter. In addition, these guidelines should be adopted by all OSG groups and featured as an established part of the program.

¹ An organization member is someone who is currently registered as a Rover or Non-Rover Adult in the OSG Dashboard, whether part of a group or 1st Lone Scouts.

The Rights of Children

Each child has a right to comfort, acceptance, and safety. They also have a right to be protected from abuse, and organization members and leaders have an absolute obligation and responsibility to protect our youth.

The following young people's rights are part of our core ethical fabric and should be protected at all times, including the right . . .

- To be safe;
- To feel safe;
- To protect their own bodies;
- To refuse inappropriate touches or actions;
- To get help against bullies;
- To not keep secrets;
- To say no;
- To tell; and
- To be believed.



Preventing Abuse and Maintaining Organizational Integrity Through 'Two Person Leadership'

Two-person leadership (TPL) creates a checks and balances system that helps illuminate and prevent opportunities for abuse by eliminating one-on-one contact between organization members/leaders and youth. Additionally, TPL guidelines are designed to protect organization members and leaders from false reports of abuse.

One-on-one contact between organizational leaders and youth is prohibited within Outdoor Service Guides and the TPL practice must be followed without exception.

Key points regarding adult and youth contact during sanctioned activities:

- All organization members and leaders have been properly criminal history checked and vetted.
- Each OSG activity must be led by a minimum of two registered and CHC'd adults, both of whom have completed OSG Youth Protection Training.
- During a OSG activity, no adult or adults may be alone with a child. (The exception: parents and legal guardians may be alone with their own children. Also situations of medical necessity, i.e. a nurse or caregiver are allowed, per acknowledgment by group leadership.)
- Any interaction with a youth requiring a personal conference must first be communicated to the second TPL adult before the conference and held within view of that TPL adult.
- When driving a group of youth to and from activities, it is ideal to have both TPL adults in the same vehicle, however, when circumstances do not allow for this, the second TPL adult can follow closely behind the first TPL adult in a secondary vehicle. Caravaning vehicles must stay together at all times; if one pulls over, the other one must also do so.
- All scouting activities must be conducted with this same sort of intentional matrix.



The Buddy System

The buddy system— a network of two or three scouts who stay together— is an easy first-line defense against abuse and endangerment. When scouts “buddy up,” the opportunity for an adult to be alone with a single child is more or less eliminated.

Buddies should be close in age and maturity level, and no scout should be forced to buddy with someone they’d rather not be with.



Tenting Arrangements

Please refer to the separate *Outdoor Service Guides Tenting Policy*.



Bathrooms and Showering Facilities

Ideally, gender-specific bathrooms or latrines—or gender-neutral facilities—should be provided at scouting activities. If gender-specific or gender-neutral latrines cannot be provided, the entrances to the latrines should be publicly visible, i.e., not hidden away from view.

Ideally, separate shower facilities should be provided for different genders. If this is not possible, separate times should be provided for showering, or scouts should be allowed to request private showering times.

Adults should respect the privacy of youth, i.e., never entering areas where youths are changing or showering unless issues of health and safety are at stake.



Use of Electronic Devices

Our modern society is driven by technology that seems to be ever present in our lives: from social media, to smart phones, personal computers, to other tablet type devices, it's all around. Organization members and leaders have an obligation to be aware of any electronic imaging and or recording device(s) present during OSG sanctioned events. It is inappropriate for anyone to use such devices to record sound or images during any activity in areas where there is an expectation of privacy, such as restrooms, portable outdoor restrooms, showers, inside tents, and other areas where normal privacy would be observed.

If a scout or their family insist on the scout being "connected" electronically, it's best for a leader to either (a) collect and occasionally monitor the scout's devices (for incoming parent messages) and/or (b) collect devices and allow scouts to contact their family on a prearranged schedule. Better yet, many groups adopt a policy of not allowing digital devices on campouts or at activities. Leaders can inform parents that in keeping with traditional scouting values, technological items should not be left at home, with adults able to notify parents in case of an emergency.



Bullying

All Outdoor Service Guides groups and activities must adopt a strict “No Bullying” policy and be ready to enforce it. Reminding youths of the scout law— “A scout is a friend to all and a brother or sister to every other scout”—is a good place to begin.



Youth Awareness

It is important to create awareness with our organizational youth about their rights against abuse and how to identify different forms of abuse. We must empower our youth with the tools to:

- **Know** – what abuse is.
- **Identify** – forms of abuse.
- **Refuse** – to accept abuse in any form or towards anyone.
- **Tell** – a trusted organization member or leader of any reasonable suspicion, witnessed abuse, or experienced abuse.

Use the acronym K.I.R.T to create awareness with our organizational youth to stop abuse.

Teaching children to trust their instincts is important! If a situation or person suddenly makes them feel uneasy, they should run, struggle, yell, or do whatever they need to do to stay safe and to get help. And they should immediately tell a trusted adult.



Identifying Child Abuse

Abuse manifests itself in different forms. Some forms are easily visible while other forms remain unseen. It is our responsibility as organization members and leaders to know and understand how to identify abuse in its different forms.

Examples:

- **Neglect** – This includes depriving youth of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and other essential necessities. It also includes careless or willful exposure of a child to harmful situations or the active failure to protect them from the same.
- **Physical abuse** – This refers to the intentional physical injury to a child by someone responsible for their care. This kind of abuse is usually visible and could include bruises, abrasions, cuts, burns, broken bones, or other obvious injuries. However, the damage cannot always be seen by the eye and may include internal injuries to joints, tendons, brain, genital area, soft tissue, and internal organs.
- **Sexual abuse** – This means forcing a child to perform sexual acts. The abuser can be either an adult or older youth who often has some kind of position of authority over the youth and who generally takes advantage of the youth's trust. Common methods used by the abuser are grooming (questionable touching), emotional manipulation, threats, bribery, trickery, and coercion. Abusers generally respond to inquiries about inappropriate or unusual situations in a nonchalant way.
- **Emotional abuse** – This includes an ongoing course of intimidations, harassment, belittlement, disparaging comments, hate language, ridicule, humiliation, regular blame, continuously being picked on by peers, and bullying. Emotional abuse is equally as harmful and destructive as other forms of abuse and can have profound lifelong negative effects on the development of youth.

Sources of Abuse

The source of abuse may be within or outside of the organization, and could include one or more of the following:

- Registered Rovers
- Other children or adolescents in the organization
- Adults providing transportation, instruction, or other assistance to OSG members
- Family members or caregivers
- Persons outside of the home or organization

Who Can Be a Molester?

Anyone can be a child molester (pedophile).

Molesters typically seek out venues that allow them to be in close proximity to children—especially where the ratio of adult to child supervision is low.

Trust your instincts. If you see someone doing something that you think is wrong or violates the safety guidelines, it must be reported.

Signs of Abuse

As an Outdoor Service Guides member and leader, it is up to you to know how to identify potential signs of abuse. Every child will react to abuse differently, so being able to read different variations of behaviors is essential in making an assessment. Let's look at some examples:

- Sudden change in characteristic personality, social interactions, or activities, including decreased meeting attendance or an unexpected drop out.
- Sudden change in school performance, enthusiasm, or friendships, including increased inability to concentrate.
- Sudden changes in eating habits.
- Depressed appearance, lack of friends, or lack of trust.
- Evidence of unexpected or recurring injuries, such as excessive bruising, black eye(s), burns and scalds, marks on the skin, bite marks, fractures, or abrasions.
- Inconsistent explanations of how injuries occurred.
- Refusal to be around certain individuals, or a reluctance to go home or to interact with a particular individual or group.
- Unusual and persistent desire to please.
- Persistent impending watchfulness.
- Acting out in an overly aggressive manner, or in sexually explicit ways.
- Using foul language, or communicating sexual innuendos.
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities involving a change of clothing.
- Excessive attachment to certain adults.
- Physical discomfort with sitting, walking or doing other physical activities that is uncharacteristic for the child; also, complaining about discomfort in the genital area, such as pain or itching.



Disclosure of Abuse and Reporting

When an organization member or leader becomes aware of indications or reports of abuse, they immediately have a responsibility to advocate for the absolute safety of that youth. This includes immediately reporting suspected abuse to the designated child welfare authorities in that state or county and in some cases directly to law enforcement officials.

What Kinds of Reporting Might You Be Required to Do?

When you witness the abuse of a child or identify signs suggesting that a child has been abused or neglected, you should report.

When you observe youth protection or safety guidelines being violated by an OSG organization member, you should report.

Reporting Suspected Neglect or Abuse

Our goal in administering this training is to help all OSG adults create an environment that prevents child abuse. We also want them prepared to report it (immediately) if and when it is detected. Again, we have an absolute responsibility to advocate for the safety of our youth.

Those people who are required by state or local law to report any and all suspicions of child abuse are known as mandatory reporters. Different states have different guidelines regarding who is or isn't a mandatory reporter, and you should become familiar with your own state's guidelines for this.

In most states, medical providers, lawyers, and teachers are considered to be mandatory reporters.

In many states, people dealing with youths in other settings (e.g., sports teams, scouting organizations) are also considered to be mandatory reporters.

Whether or not you're a mandatory reporter by law, we hope that the guidelines presented here, when taken in tandem with the Scout Law, will encourage you to consider yourself one.

In considering your role as a reporter, it's useful to know and understand the following:

1. All reasonable suspicions of abuse must be reported. Again: the safety and well-being of the child must be our primary concern and is more important than our own discomfort or anxiety about being a reporter.
2. When an OSG member reports suspected child abuse in good faith, it does not constitute an actual allegation of abuse. In other words, you're not accusing the potential abuser of a crime; you're simply reporting your observations to authorities. They, in turn, have the training to evaluate more fully.
3. If you report suspected abuse, you may ask for your name to be kept confidential, i.e., you may give an anonymous report.
4. If you report suspected abuse and no abuse is found, you will not be in "trouble." The



authorities who work to safeguard children would also rather have a suspicion be reported and found innocent than to have an actual abuse situation be unreported. The “Good Samaritan” doctrine protects those making good faith reports from personal liability under those states with “authorized immunity” clauses.

Talking With a Child Who May Have Been Abused

Let’s consider how to respond to a potentially abused child and what information is needed:

- Present a calm and soothing manner when talking to the child. (You may be upset by what’s happening, but showing that won’t help the child or the process.)
- Listen. This includes being prepared to wait quietly while the child responds.
- Be supportive.
- Don’t make any statements that may suggest shame, disbelief, fear, disgust, or blame.
- Don’t ask the youth why they did not report earlier.
- Assure the youth that it was not their fault.
- Assure the youth that you believe them.
- If you can, gently ask basic, specific, and open-ended questions, such as...
- Name, address and phone number of the victim.
- Name, address and phone number of the offender.
- Relationship with the offender (e.g. family member, leader, family friend)
- Location of the abuse.
- Nature of the abuse (e.g. physical, emotional, sexual)
- Date and time of the abuse.
- Whether anyone else knows of the abuse.
- If possible, write down the details.

How to Report Suspected Child Abuse

If you have a reasonable suspicion that a youth is being harmed or is at risk of harm, you have a duty to immediately report this information to the local child welfare authorities, including the local police if applicable (the child welfare authorities can inform you of whether police notification is also needed). Locate your own authorities by searching the Internet (e.g., “child protection reporting, my state”) or contacting your local police department.

Note that if the child has been acutely injured or is in medical distress, **your first call should be to 9-1-1.**

If you feel uneasy about reporting on your own, you may inform a co-leader regarding the situation and ask them to be with you when you make the call. Informing a co-leader is optional: if you choose to do so, their presence will help support you through the experience and will provide a second set of ears for the conversation. You may also make the call on your own.

Once you have notified the above authorities, you should also immediately contact your group scoutmaster (GSM). They will take care of notifying the regional commissioner. These notifications are necessary so that proper actions can be taken, possibly including temporary or permanent suspension of a leader or helper from activities involving contact with young people.

It is not appropriate for OSG individuals, groups, or regions to carry out internal investigations into cases of suspected child abuse; our role is to “report and support,” participating as requested by the authorities.

You should carefully record and document all interactions, communications, concerns, and allegations associated with any such case. In other words, keep notes of your phone calls and interactions.

Requirements for reporting reasonable suspicions of abuse can be different from state to state. Here is an example according to the standards set forth in the Oregon Rev. Stat. § 419B.010;

A report is required when any public or private official has reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom the official comes in contact has suffered abuse. The duty to report under this section is personal to the public or private official alone, regardless of whether the official is employed by, a volunteer of, or a representative or agent for any type of entity or organization that employs persons or uses persons as volunteers who are public or private officials in its operations.

You may want to take a moment to research your own state resources and bookmark them for future use. We hope you’ll never need them, but this way, you’ll be prepared in case you do. You can find this information on the [Child Welfare Information Gateway website](#), provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be maintained throughout all stages of dealing with an incident of suspected abuse. Confidentiality refers to managing information in a respectful, professional, and purposeful manner. Only those who need to know about a complaint or report should be given information. Informally revealing information to anyone else not without a “need to know” must be avoided.

Do You Have Questions?

If after reading this, you have further questions or are feeling uncertain about your responsibilities as a reporter, we recommend you discuss this further with your group’s GSM. You might also suggest it as a discussion for an upcoming auxiliary or group council meeting.

Appendix A. Deviations

Lone Scouts

For Lone Scouts, any instruction in this document involving the scout group or group scoutmaster (GSM) should instead be referred to the Lone Scout commissioner.

Lifetime Members

Adults who have purchased Lifetime OSG memberships will not be charged annual membership fees but will be asked to pay for their annual CHCs, effective January, 2018.

Appendix B: Electronic Communications Addendum

The OSG National *Youth Ethics and Protection Policy* states that “one-on-one contact between organizational leaders and youth is prohibited within the OSG and the TPL [Two Person Leadership] practice must be followed without exception.” In an effort to make the TPL policy explicit in our digital communications, Outdoor Service Guides has adopted this addendum.

Electronic and Telephone Communications with Children

Scouts use several forms of contact to communicate and connect, including telephone, email, text, computer chat, video, and all similar technology. In an effort to clarify these communications in the context of our *Youth Ethics and Protection Policy*, see the following guidelines.

Children Under age 12 (Otters, Timberwolves, and young Pathfinders)

No adult leader or adult scout shall communicate directly via email, text, or similar technology with any youth scout member. All communications will be directed to a parent or responsible adult guardian on record.

If a youth scout sends a message to a scout leader or adult, that leader or adult will direct any reply to the scout’s parent or responsible adult guardian on record.

Exceptions may be made to this policy in regards to private reports of suspected abuse.

Children Aged 12-17 (Pathfinders)

Adult leaders or adult scouts may communicate directly via email, text, or similar technology with youth scout members, but ALL messages MUST also be copied (cc’d, group text, etc.) to the youth scout’s parent or responsible adult guardian on record.

If a youth scout sends a message to a scout leader or adult, that leader or adult will reply to the scout, AND INCLUDE the scout’s parent or responsible adult guardian on record to the message, email, or conversation.

Exceptions may be made to this policy in regards to private reports of suspected abuse.

The final version of this Addendum was approved by majority vote of the OSG Board of Directors on May 8, 2020.