



DEALING WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR OF A YOUTH MEMBER

Leader Support Guide

From time to time every Group has its share of youth members who are unruly, disruptive, annoying, and even dangerous to the point that even the Leaders have great sympathy for their parents; perhaps the Leaders are even surprised that at least one of the parents hasn't been up on a murder charge.

In this day of parents who are very protective, and even cocoon their children, and with the world becoming more litigious, the question is to how to safely handle the situations that arise.

Scouts has answers that are fair, protective of the rights of all and effective.

The first thing is that all Cub and Joey Leaders should read and try and apply the 'Leaders Support Guide Managing Behaviour in the Pack or Mob'. Scout and Venturer Leaders should use 'Leaders Support Guide Promoting Good Behaviour in the Troop or Unit'. All leaders should be familiar with the other 'Leaders Support Guide Managing Challenging Behaviour'. (All available on our web site, Leaders Page, support guides on the drop down menu <http://www.nswscouts.com.au/Support-Guides/default.aspx>)

The directions for dealing with problems are in the Organisation & Information Handbook on the Web (on the page 127) but we will attempt to simplify them here.

STEP ONE.

Is it a real naughtiness that might involve the authorities, even the police? (No? then go to step 2)

If it is a matter that is likely to lead to a criminal charge, or something that had the victim in fear of his (or her) immediate safety or some immediate physical harm?

THEN:

- i. Firstly you must ensure all members at the scene are moved to a place of safety and away from the threats. Sometimes this means removing the alleged culprit. (If there is a possible danger to others a Leader in charge of an activity- camp – or meeting, in consultation with the other leaders attending exclude a person and ask parents to take him home..)
- ii. Immediately notify the State Office, or a senior member of the Regional Team.
- iii. Under **no circumstances** interview the alleged victim or alleged perpetrator without advice from State Office or the Regional Commissioner. (You could be accused of tainting the evidence and/or depriving them of their rights under law)
- iv. However you should (a) Get the names and phone numbers of any actual, witnesses. (b) ask them to write out a statement of what they saw, to be given to the person in charge of the incident (Please keep copies for the State Office)

STEP TWO

Is it something that requires more than a quick 'behave yourself'?

(Careful now a 'clip over the ear' is VERY wrong, no physical punishment must ever be administered, this includes yelling at them)

You need to follow the process set out in Conflict Resolution 3.1 (page 40 Organisation & Information handbook web version.) which in simple terms asks you to:

- i. Ensure all sides have a chance to put their side of the story
 - 3.1.3 On all occasions when conflict arises, the procedures used to resolve the situation must ensure that all members, particularly our youth members, are protected, and that natural justice is not denied to parties concerned.

- ii. Take notes of the interviews which include explanations and names and dates, including those of witnesses. (*Copy for Regional Files*)

3.1.4 *At all stages of the conflict resolution process contemporaneous notes and diary entries must be kept of all meetings held with any person or persons relating to the subject of a complaint and all actions to be taken in regard to the matter and the people involved should be identified.*

- iii. That where necessary you ensure those involved have support, especially if showing signs of distress.

3.1.5 *Consideration must be given to the emotional needs of all involved, including the person, subject of complaint. Where appropriate, the Region should ensure that all affected members have a readily available support network, such as family or close friends. Where any person appears to be in emotional distress, or is suspended, they must be encouraged to consider support counselling and efforts made to assist in finding a suitable counsellor locally. Medical Practitioners, School Counsellors, Hospital Social Workers and Community Health Centres are all sources of such information.*

- iv. Fill out an incident report. (*Available on the web site at resources page, form M6.*) DON'T use terms such as assault, and other legal type words. They are unhelpful in looking at the problem and have a potential for defamation charges to be levelled at you. Use words that simply describe what happened.

Eg. He "attempted to murder the DC" means nothing to us... "He put rat poison in the DCs coffee" gives us a clue.

STEP THREE

This is where we apply the policy on the actual handling of the situation. As set out in Group Organisation 2.23 in the Organisation and Information Handbook .

1. **Did you get the Troop, Unit, or even Pack Council involved?** (*Keep minutes/notes*)

2.23.3 *In circumstances where the behaviour of a youth member is considered to be unacceptable or in breach of the Scout Law, the Leader in charge of the Section may suspend the youth member, after consultation with the Pack, Troop, or Unit Council where appropriate. The suspension must be regarded as a temporary measure.*

(SPECIAL NOTE: As part of scouting we are trying to assist youth members in acquiring life skills. We need to help them learn and try things out for themselves,, hence the Troop and Unit Council, with appropriate guidance from Leaders to ensure fairness, is essential in dealing with all problems confronting the section..

- 3 **Did you notify the GL?**

2.23.4 *The Group Leader (and in the case of a Sponsored Group, the Sponsoring Authority) must be notified of such suspension without undue delay. The parents of the youth member must also be advised and the reasons for the suspension given.*

- 4 **If the Leaders and Youth Council believe the youth member should be removed from the group, was this discussed with the GL or Leader in Charge (if none the DC) ?** (*Keep notes and dates*)

2.23.5 *The approval of the GL is necessary in any case of dismissal of a youth member. The GL of a sponsored Group must first consult the Sponsoring Authority.*

- 5 **Was the family advised of their right of appeal?** (*Keep a note of the details including who was notified.*)

2.23.6 *In any case of dismissal, the youth member has a right of appeal to the RC (Ops), and the Regional Executive Committee may appoint a small Committee with full power to act for this purpose. The youth member in question must be given reasonable opportunity to attend the Committee's hearing of his/her appeal and state his/her case.*