



THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

PERSONAL PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Including the Code of Conduct
(page 2)

Leader Support Guide

IMPORTANT

In the past many children were too trusting, and, as a result, were easy prey to the undesirable element within the community.

Over recent years there has been a shift toward encouraging people to be more cautious and even suspicious of certain actions by others. This has meant that some might now view quite innocent actions and situations with some suspicion.

Today, teachers, police, youth workers and all others have to abide by new codes of conduct, to ensure their behaviour doesn't cause concern in children and in fact encourages a feeling of safety when they are around.

Following these policies will not only provide additional security for our youth members, and serve to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse, but also encourage a sense of safety and security in both youth members and leaders alike.

Adhering to these policies and procedures you are maximizing the protection of both yourself and your members.

The full range of the New South Wales Branch's Policies and Procedures are contained in the Organisation and Information Handbook, available on the web.

This Leaders Support Guide brings together those that are designed to offer you and your members guidance into the best way to ensure you have maximised the protection of yourself, your team and youth members.

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1. POLICY STATEMENT ON PROTECTION OF MEMBERS

The Scout Association is committed to the health, safety and well-being of all its Members and will provide a safe environment which allows this to be achieved.

The aim of The Scout Association is to encourage and contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, mental, social and spiritual potential as individuals so that they may take a constructive place in society as responsible citizens.

Physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse of youth members will not be tolerated. The Association has developed systems to prevent known offenders from entering the movement as Leaders or holding any office either uniform or non uniform which would place such persons in contact with youth members.

The Association has also developed procedures to assist in the detection and investigation of child abuse in particular where allegations are made against Leaders with direct responsibilities for implementation of the youth program.

As an organisation dedicated to the welfare of young people, we encourage all incidents of child abuse to be reported to the appropriate authorities and will cooperate with those authorities in the investigation of such incidents.

Our documented Code of Behaviour (Conduct) for Adult Members has been implemented to protect them as well as youth members that may come under their control or supervision whilst engaged in Scouting activities.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ADULTS

The purpose of Scouting is to encourage the physical, mental, social and spiritual development of young people. This is achieved by the example and guidance of dedicated men and women who help the youth members in the fulfilment of the Scout Promise and Law, so they become constructive and responsible citizens.

This Code of Conduct is expected of all adults, Uniformed and Layside, who work within The Scout Association, recognising that at all times they should act responsibly and exercise a "duty of care" to the Youth members.

1. Adults in Scouting respect the dignity of themselves and others.
2. Adults in Scouting demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility, recognising that at all times their words and actions are an example to other members of the Movement.
3. Adults in Scouting act at all times in accordance with Scouting principles, thereby setting a suitable example for all.
4. Adults in Scouting do not use the Movement to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with Scouting principles.
5. Adults in Scouting act with consideration and good judgement in all interpersonal relationships, both inside and outside Scouting.
6. Adults in Scouting respect everyone's right to personal privacy. at all times. They take special care where sleeping, changing of clothing, bathing and ablutions is associated with any Scouting activity.
7. Adults in Scouting avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with youth members wherever possible. Remember, "in sight - out of hearing".
8. Adults in Scouting, for their own protection, should avoid potentially compromising situations by ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance whilst supervising and/or accompanying Youth members. It is recognised that in certain circumstances it may be necessary for a Leader or Adult, whilst acting responsibly and exercising their "duty of care", to be alone with a Youth member.
9. Adults in Scouting realise that bullying, physical or verbal abuse, neglect or any other type of abuse is unacceptable conduct by any member of the Movement.
10. Adults in Scouting must report any conduct seen or heard that does not comply with this "code of conduct".

3. PROTECTIVE PRACTICES FOR SCOUTING LEADERS – "Taking Care of Yourself"

Leaders of all Sections are encouraged to adopt protective practices to maximise their protection from a misconstrued act Whilst the following list is by no means exhaustive, it is given as a guide to foster a better Scouting spirit

1. Do not engage or let others engage in any of the following
 - abusive initiation ceremonies;
 - forcing children into macho type activities;
 - getting undressed in front of children;
 - Invading the privacy of children whilst they are showering, toileting;
 - photographing undressed children;

- sleeping in a tent with children;
 - rough, physically hurtful or sexually provocative games;
 - making sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a young person;
 - inappropriate and intrusive touching and hugging;
 - regular scapegoating, ridiculing, rejecting, isolating or taking the "mickey" out of a child.
1. Whilst many of the above may not be legally abusive, they don't belong in Scouting. They are hurtful, intrusive, set a bad example and don't promote safety.
 2. Have an "OPEN DOOR" policy. Declare all meetings open to parents, other Leaders and the Region Team. Have other children, parents, friends, or Leaders with you when in any situation that could be construed as compromising or questionable (eg camping, outings, private interviews or when transporting youth members to and from meetings).
 3. When undertaking Scouting activities, particularly overnight activities, when both boys and girls are participating it is important that Adults of both genders accompany the group.
 4. Sole Leader Sections should undertake to have a parent roster
 5. system, so that at least one other adult is present at all times.
 6. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Treat all children (and others) with respect and dignity. Watch your language, tone of voice and body gestures.
 7. Develop a Group etiquette that allows for Leaders to feel **comfortable and** caring enough to point out to each **other any inappropriate attitudes** or behaviours. Don't tolerate abusive or inappropriate behaviour - deal with it quickly.
 8. Encourage, don't pressure. Be sensitive to each youth member's individual capacity for physical activities and protect them from any unwarranted pressure to participate.
 9. Encourage youth members to trust their own feelings about a Leader's behaviour and to assert their right to determine what behaviour they are comfortable with.
 10. Respect a youth member's privacy. Expect them to respect yours.
 11. Develop a healthy lifestyle outside of Scouting with adults your own age. Encourage the lonely and isolated Leader to do the same.
 12. Do not let children involve you in excessive attention seeking behaviour that is overtly sexual or physical in nature. Be particularly careful with the very needy child. Redirect the behaviour into 'healthy' activities and provide caring attention before it is asked for.
 13. Don't bring individual youth members to your home, flat or elsewhere (eg to watch videos, play cards or take photos) without parental approval and without another adult present.
 14. Act your age. Maintain an adult role model with young children. Be friendly, courteous and kind. You have a position of power and influence. Don't abuse it.
 15. Mixed teams of men and women in either mixed or single sex Mobs, Packs, Troops, or Units may provide a safer, healthier climate for the Leader and the child.
 16. When in doubt - ask. One Leader's poor behaviour reflects on all Leaders in the Movement. Denial of one's uncomfortable feelings is the single most common behaviour that Leaders, friends, parents and children report on after an abuser is finally apprehended (eg "We thought something funny was going on but didn't feel right about saying anything". "Oh he's a really good Leader with the kids, he couldn't do anything like that. He's so dedicated". "I didn't want to get the Association into trouble").
 17. Discipline and manage behaviour. Do not abuse. Be clear that when a child is difficult, it is the behaviour that is 'Not OK and that the child is.'OK'. Attack the problem not the person. Our task is to build self esteem not to shatter it. Be firm and fair. Avoid favourites or at least giving them a lot more

- attention. Likewise, avoid concentrating only on disruptive behaviour. Learn disciplining and appropriate behaviour management skills.
18. Encourage open discussion, particularly with older age groups, about what young people like and dislike about your behaviour. Just as you give children 'feedback' about how they behave - invite and reward feedback about how they see you behaving.
 19. Don't exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
 20. Always set a good example in dress, behaviour, language, etc, as adults are taken as role models by youth and other adults alike.
 21. Be on the watch for instances of ALL types of abuse of youth members by other youth members.
 22. Understand your Branch policies on 'Personal Protection and Behaviour' and respect these. Times are different to when most of us were kids. For example: children have a right to feel safe there is nothing so awful that you can't tell someone - select four people you can trust to approach with any problem - complain about abuse until you are heard (see also Scout Protecting Your Children- A Parent's Guide Booklet, P.16).
 23. The Scout Protecting Your Children- A Parent's Guide Booklet is a useful reference for communicating with youth members on sensitive matters.

4. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

YOUTH MEMBERS RIGHTS:

Youth Members of The Scout Association have the right to:

- be safe;
- be listened to;
- be respected;
- privacy;
- take calculated risks in a protected setting;
- an inclusive environment;
- be referred to appropriate professional help if needed;
- be protected from abuse by other youth members.

YOUTH MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Youth Members of The Scout Association are responsible for:

- showing respect to other youth members;
- keeping themselves safe;
- accurately reporting inappropriate behaviour or at risk situations for youth members.

ADULT MEMBERS RIGHTS

Adult Members of The Scout Association have the right to:

- ongoing training and information on all aspects of child protection;
- support in the reporting of suspicions of child abuse;
- access to support agencies;
- fair and equitable treatment from the Association;
- be protected from abuse by youth members;
- be protected from abuse by other adult members and parents.

ADULT MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Adult Members of The Scout Association are responsible for:

- working as a team to ensure the safety of youth members in their care;

- using appropriate youth behaviour management;
- believing and responding to youth members' statements concerning alleged abuse;
- ensuring the rights and responsibilities of youth members are enforced;
- reporting suspicions of child abuse to the Chief Commissioner or Chief Executive or their Delegates;
- not abusing youth members physically, emotionally or sexually;
- only disclosing sensitive information to appropriate authorities and/or designated internal personnel, on a 'need to know' basis.

THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION'S RIGHTS

The Scout Association has the right to:

- expect all Adult Members to comply with its Code of Behaviour (Conduct);
- expect all Youth Members to keep within the bounds of general community standards of reasonable behaviour;
- take appropriate action if Members contravene its Code of Behaviour (Conduct);
- expect all Adult Members to undertake issues management Training as and when advised to;
- expect that its Leaders will not abuse youth members physically, emotionally or sexually;
- take appropriate action in the event of malicious accusations; acquire police checks with regard to convictions in relevant areas.

THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Scout Association is responsible for:

- providing maximum safety to Youth Members; insisting on all Adult Leaders undertaking ongoing issues management training;
- widely promoting this policy to Members and the community at large;
- designating an officer to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of child protection and a Code of Behaviour (Conduct) within the Association;
- encouraging open discussion of child protection issues; providing support to members who report suspicions of child abuse; providing appropriate referrals for Members who report suspicions of child abuse;
- treating information of suspected child abuse with confidentiality and disclosing information only to those who need to know;
- taking appropriate action if Youth Members contravene general community standards of reasonable behaviour;
- making every effort to identify potential abusers via police checks and interviews.

5. CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS (When child abuse is suspected)

You have a suspicion on reasonable grounds:

When a child tells you he or she has been abused. When someone else tells you a child has been abused. A child tells you he or she knows someone who has been abused (often a child is referring to himself or herself). When your own observation of a particular child's behaviour and/or injuries, and your knowledge of children generally, leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring.

If you suspect a child has been abused, you need to:

Ensure the child is safe (if in your care). Maintain the safety of other youth members as appropriate. Obtain the following information to provide your Regional nominated Senior Leader and in other instances to the Chief Commissioner or Chief Executive:

- the child's name, age and address;
- your reason for suspecting abuse has occurred (eg information, injuries, observed behaviour);
- your assessment of immediate danger to the child including.

- information about whereabouts of alleged abuser(s);
- what arrangements, if any, exist for the care and protection of the child;
- what involvement, if any known, other agencies have in dealing with the suspected abuse or neglect issues.

Ring the Association's aforementioned representative to seek advice on how to proceed or to make a report. You will be asked to provide sufficient information to help decide what to do next, or

Seek advice from The Scout Association concerning:

parent involvement/follow up; police involvement; medical treatment; Scout Association role; Department of Community Services role.

If in any doubt always seek advice.

In the event that you suspect abuse by someone outside Scouting (eg within the child's own family), advise the Association's aforementioned representative as it may be appropriate for the Association to report it to the relevant Government authority.

6. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING ACCUSATIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY ADULTS IN SCOUTING

The policy is to encourage reporting in confidence of any behaviour by any member of the Movement who is suspected of not conforming with our documented Code of Behaviour (Conduct).

Set out below is the procedure to be followed.

1. Ensure that all members and supporters of Scouting are made clearly aware of all aspects of our Code of Behaviour (Conduct) when first seeking to become involved with Scouting.
2. Any person suspected of breaking the Code is to be reported in confidence as soon as possible to the Regional Commissioner when all known facts and suspicions are to be fully advised.
3. Anonymous letters and phone calls claiming breach of the Code and naming a person are to be taken seriously and immediately reported to Branch Headquarters for investigation.

4. **REPORT DO NOT INVESTIGATE. Any questioning of children MUST be left to trained investigators.** (*Report should go to the Child Protection Officer at State Office 02 9735 9000*)

5. Check to ensure the victim and others effected emotionally are being most appropriately cared for following initial counselling.

NOTE: The procedures followed by Region and Branch Headquarters are outlined in the Organisation and Information Handbook in the section on Behavioral Management., starting at page 40. (December 2001 update on www.nsw.scouts.com.au/)

7. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING ACCUSATIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY YOUTH MEMBERS

Situations can arise anywhere including in the local hall or on an outing.

When Leaders are present, they must ensure that they remain calm and desist from becoming physically involved with an individual youth member unless it is necessary for instance to separate youth members involved in an altercation.

Any continuing concerns relating to material behavioural problems are to be discussed with the parents as soon as a Leader feels the need, otherwise the particular Section of a Group may become unreasonably disrupted.

If problems still persist, then the matter should be referred to the Group Leader or a representative of the Regional team particularly if the parents become uncooperative or the feeling is that a particular offending youth member should be asked to discontinue involvement in Scouting.

Incidents of major concern that take place when older youth members are involved in an activity without adult supervision, such as an overnight hike, should be reported to the office of the Regional Commissioner within forty eight hours of becoming aware.

A written report with recommendations for disciplinary or other action is to be submitted as soon as reasonably possible after the happening of an incident but not later than seven days

Whilst the Association is reluctant to cancel the membership of a youth member, it will take this action if it determines there is no realistic option in the circumstances.

8 MEDIA CONTACT MANAGEMENT

There is a need to exercise caution if you are approached by representatives of any section of the media.

What on the surface can appear to be a positive promotion of Scouting can be turned around. This was the case with a National current affairs program several years ago when a television crew filmed activities at a Cub Pack meeting but when this went to air they included voice overs which raised questions concerning youth safety in Scouting.

In another instance we had a youth member who was at a commercial fun park fall from a chair lift and the report in the media had the public believing it was a Scouting activity when, in fact, our youth member was there on an outing with his junior football team.

As a **general rule**, if you are approached by the media concerning anything that could be linked to Scouting then do not make any comment without seeking advice from your Regional team representative.

The Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive of NSW Branch act as the spokespersons in regard to interfacing with the media. In this way Scouting can communicate in a uniform and controlled manner to reflect positively on the Movement and its Members.

It is important you be aware that if you make a statement to the media without seeking advice and approval from the Association resulting in the Association's good name being affected, legal proceedings for defamation can be taken against you.

In instances where you simply wish to promote an activity being run by your Group or Region and the media approach is made by you, then you can do this without referral.

It needs to be clearly understood that if an adult member of Scouting is facing criminal proceedings for inappropriate behaviour and the case has not yet been heard or a judgement made, then opinions of such a person's character or actions should not be generally discussed. If such person is found to be not guilty by the legal system they could possibly seek damages for defamation.

When there is any doubt in your mind concerning media contact in any particular situation then do not offer any comment without prior referral to your Region or Branch Headquarters..

NEVER EVER SAY 'NO COMMENT'

The media hear this as ' we are guilty'.

Simply refer then to the Executive Officer at State Office (9735 9000) who will be only to pleased to assist them

Further reading:
The Leader Support Guide titled "Avoiding Abuse in Scouting".
Available on www.nswscouts.com.au/