



# *Avoiding Abuse in Scouting*

## Leader Support Guide

### **Introduction:**

Being an adult leader in Scouts Australia (NSW) is a privilege. The excellence of the program and the safety of our youth members calls for a high standard in adult leadership. We take pride in the quality of our adult leadership.

A number of policies have been instituted which are aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within the Scouting program. These policies focus on leadership selection and on placing barriers to potential abuse within the program.

### **Leader Guide:**

Scouts Australia (NSW) has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies are primarily for the protection of our youth members; however, they also serve to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.

- Two-deep leadership. Two Leaders or one Leader and a parent of a participant, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required on all trips and outings where adult leadership is involved. There are a few instances, such as patrol activities, when no adult leadership is required
- On all trips and outings under the leadership of a youth member, such as a Patrol Camp, the youth member's Leader shall ensure the young leader understands the safety issues involved and together they have discussed a number of possible scenarios and suitable actions.
- No one-on-one contact. One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is not permitted. In situations that require personal dealings, such contact is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths.
- Respect of privacy. Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- Separate accommodation. When camping, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his own parent or carer. Groups are strongly encouraged to have separate shower and latrine facilities for females. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled. A notice showing times should be clearly visible.
- Proper preparation for high-adventure activities. Activities with elements of risk should never be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, safety measures and ensuring that Scouts Australia (NSW) policies are adhered to.
- All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents / carers and leaders.
- Appropriate attire. Proper clothing for activities is required. For example, skinny-dipping is not appropriate as part of Scouting.
- Constructive discipline. Discipline used in Scouting should be constructive and reflect Scouting's values. Corporal punishment is not permitted.
- Hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any Scouting activity.
- Youth members in leadership and supervision. Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by Patrol Leaders and other youth members to ensure that Scouts Australia (NSW) policies are followed.

### **Why do most child victims of sexual abuse keep the abuse secret?**

A victim of child sexual abuse is usually under a great deal of pressure to keep the abuse secret. In many cases of child molestation, the molester has threatened to harm the child or a member of the child's family. The molester might have told the child that he would not be believed even if the child did tell. Another common situation is that the molester will tell the child that if the child tells about the abuse, he will get into trouble. The clear message is given to the child that if another person finds out, something bad will happen to the child. This pressure to maintain silence can often be successfully overcome by establishing open communication between children and adults through a proper educational program for children.

### **What should I do if a child tells me they have been sexually abused?**

How an adult responds to a child when they try to disclose abuse can influence the outcome of the child's victimisation. By maintaining an apparent calm, the adult can help reassure the child that everything is going to be okay. By not criticising the child, we counteract any statements the molester made to the victim about the child getting into trouble. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to them and that you would like to get them some help. Allegations by a Scouting youth member concerning abuse in the program must be reported to State Office. Since these reports are required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities but that you will not tell anyone else. It is important that you not tell anyone other than the Scout Executive or the Child Protective Services Agency about allegations of abuse - if the allegations cannot be substantiated, legal action could be taken against you for defamation of character.

### **What are the "three Rs" of Youth Protection?**

The "three Rs" of Youth Protection convey a simple message that Scouts Australia (NSW) wants its youth members to learn:

**Recognise** situations that place them at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone could be a molester.

**Resist** unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.

**Report** attempted or actual molestation to a parent or other trusted adult. This prevents further abuse of them and helps to protect other children. Let the Scouting youth member know they will not be blamed for what occurred.

### **Youth Member Behaviour Guidelines:**

The Scout Association is values based youth development organisation that helps young people learn positive attributes of character, citizenship, and personal fitness. The Scout Association has the expectation that all participants in the

Scouting program will relate to each other in accord with the principles embodied in the Scout Promise and Law.

One of the developmental tasks of childhood is to learn appropriate behaviour. Children are not born with an innate sense of propriety and they need guidance and direction. The example set by positive adult role models is a powerful tool for shaping behaviour and a tool that is stressed in Scouting.

Misbehaviour by a single youth member in Scouting may constitute a threat to the safety of the individual who misbehaves as well as to the safety of other unit members. Such misbehaviour constitutes an unreasonable burden on a Scout unit and cannot be ignored.

### **Member Responsibilities:**

All members of the Scout Association are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the Scout Promise and Law. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs and alcohol have no place in the Scouting program and may result in the revocation of a youth member's membership.

If confronted by threats of violence or other forms of bullying from other youth members, youth members should seek help from their Leaders or parents / carers.

### **Section Responsibilities:**

Adult leaders of Scouting Sections are responsible for monitoring the behaviour of youth members and interceding when necessary. Parents / carers of youth members who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance in dealing with the issue.

Scouts Australia (NSW) does not permit the use of corporal punishment or inappropriate verbal assault by Leaders when disciplining youth members.

The Leaders and Group Leader should review repetitive or serious incidents of misbehaviour in consultation with the parents / carers of the child to determine a course of corrective action including possible revocation of the youth's membership.

If problem behaviour persists, Groups may revoke a youth member's membership in that Group. When a Group revokes a youth member's membership, it should promptly notify the Regional Commissioner of the action.

The Group should inform State Office about all incidents that result in a physical injury or involve allegations of sexual misconduct by a youth member with another youth member.

### **Leadership Requirements for Trips and Outings:**

#### ***Two-deep leadership:***

Two Leaders, or one Leader and a parent of a participating youth member, one of whom must be at least 21 years of age or older, are required for all trips or outings.

Mixed membership overnight activities require male and female adult leaders, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, and one of whom must be a Leader.

There are a few instances, such as with certain patrol, unit and crew activities, including those that involve overnight stays, when no adult leadership is required. In these cases there must always be a minimum of four in the group, with at least two of the same sex, and that the parents or carer have signified that they are aware that there will be no adult supervision

Two-deep adult leadership is required for flying activities. For basic orientation flights, the adult licensed pilot in control of the aircraft is sufficient for the flight while two-deep leadership is maintained on the ground.

Two-deep adult leadership is required for water activities. For basic training, the adult instructor in control of the craft is sufficient, while two-deep leadership is maintained on shore.

During transportation to and from planned Scouting activities, if you cannot provide two adults for each vehicle, the minimum requirement is one adult and two or more youth members - never one on one. A common departure point is recommended.

**Male and female:**

Male and female leaders require separate sleeping facilities. Couples in full time relationships may share the same quarters if appropriate facilities are available.

Where male and female youth participants are to be accommodated overnight, they shall not, in principle share the same facilities. If this is not possible, such as in a hall, marquee, cave or similar communal facility, there should be a clear physical separation between males and females and each participant should be advised of the lack of separate facilities prior to commencement of the activity. *(See appendix 'A': An extract from the Information & Organisation Handbook " )*

When staying in tents, no youth will stay in the tent of an adult other than his or her parent or carer. If separate shower and latrine facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled. A notice showing the times should be displayed. The buddy system should be used for latrines by having one person wait outside the entrance, or provide Occupied and Unoccupied signs and/or inside door latches.

Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of youth members in situations where the youth are changing clothes or taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

**Safety rule of four:**

No fewer than four individuals are to go on any expedition or camp. If an accident occurs, one person stays with the injured, *(which could be a leader alone)* and two go for help. Additional adult leadership requirements must reflect an awareness of such factors as size and skill level of the group, anticipated environmental conditions, and overall degree of challenge.

**Conclusion:**

Within the community, at large, the reporting of abuse against children has increased significantly over recent years. This is due, in part, to programs designed to educate young people to come forward and report incidents of suspected abuse.

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 others have to all 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.

---

**YOU MUST REPORT ALL ALLEGATIONS AND SUSPICIONS - DO NOT INVESTIGATE.**

***(There can be no exception or variation to this policy)***

Those at all levels of the Association **must** report any suspicions and allegations of sexual, emotional or physical impropriety. The report should be made direct to the Child Protection Officer at State Office, or the Chief Commissioner *If you find this difficult then contact whoever you would feel comfortable talking to, your Regional Commissioner, District Commissioner or Group Leader.* State Office will provide guidance and direction as to what action should be instigated.

*There will be occasions where a youth member could be in imminent danger and therefore delay in contacting State Office would increase the risk of physical and / or mental injury. In the case where the Leader reporting suspicions has been unable to contact State Office, Chief Commissioner or Regional HQ / Commissioners they should contact DoCS direct on 1800 656 463 (Child Protection & Family Crisis Service). In this instance they are to provide State Office with relevant details including the time, date, person contacted and their response as soon as possible.*

**EXCEPTIONS & VARIATIONS:** *The guidelines cannot be varied, except by the Regional Commissioner, or Chief Commissioner. Approval will only be given after, they have conducted a 'risk assessment' and, if approved, authorised the necessary additions to be made to the relevant indemnity/permission form. This will allow guardians/parents to be more fully informed of the details, and aware that the activity will be outside our usual guidelines, prior to their signing the relevant permission form.*

## APPENDIX. A

(Extract from *Information & Organisation Handbook "Activity Accommodation Policy"* (page 1))

### ACTIVITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

#### 1. MIXED GENDER ACCOMMODATION

- 1.1 Where a Scouting activity requires both males and females to be accommodated overnight, males and females shall not, in principle share the same facilities.
- 1.2 Circumstances may arise in which separate accommodation for males and females cannot be provided. In such cases the activity leader should advise each participant of the lack of separate facilities prior to commencement of the activity.
- 1.3 Irrespective of the circumstances, there should be a clear physical separation between males and females.

#### 2. ADULT/YOUTH MEMBER ACTIVITY ACCOMMODATION

- 2.1 Separate accommodation must be provided for youth and adult members on overnight Scouting activities, except in the circumstances listed in 2.2 below:
- 2.2 An exception to the general requirement for separate accommodation may be made in the following circumstances:
  - a) Cub Scout accommodation in halls, where the presence of one or more leaders may be desirable for discipline/security.
  - b) Accommodation of the pack/troop/unit etc in a hall, marquee, cave or similar communal facility.
  - c) Accommodation shared by members of the same family.

**In these situations there should always be a clear physical separation between adult and youth members. Whenever possible a physical division (eg screen) should be provided.**

- 2.3 In emergency situations (eg hypothermia) treatment by direct body contact should be provided to youth members by youth members rather than by adult members.
- 2.4 Under no circumstances should an adult member ever share accommodation with one youth member only. Should this situation arise, for any reason, a report outlining the circumstances should be provided to the responsible Commissioner at the earliest opportunity.