

**SEASONAL CAMP STAFF
YOUTH PROTECTION AND PERSONAL SAFETY TRAINING**
Local Council Training Outline

Time Frame

60 minutes

Instructional Objectives

As a result of this training, camp staff members will be able to:

- Define Youth Protection.
- List signs of neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse or sexual molestation in campers or other staff members.
- Explain response and reporting procedures relating to suspected child abuse.
- Explain the barriers to child abuse as related to a resident camping situation.
- List precautions that help prevent accusations.
- Understand personal safety issues.

Training Aids and Equipment

- *Camp Leadership—Youth Protection Begins With You*, No. 46-127
- *A Time to Tell* (2007 revision)
- *Personal Safety Awareness* (2007 revision)
- Online Youth Protection training course

Method of Teaching

Lecture and discussion

Applicable Standards

Resident Camp

Note: Discuss these Youth Protection situations in a manner where the policies and guidelines are explained and discussed. It is important for staff to know the guidelines and the resources available related to Youth Protection and personal safety awareness.

Introduction

Define Youth Protection.

Youth Protection is a set of strategies designed to reduce opportunities for mistreatment of youth in the Scouting environment.

BSA camps should address Youth Protection training from two different perspectives:

1. The first perspective is that from any youth participating in a Scouting activity—protecting the youth from abuse and increasing the youth’s awareness of personal safety strategies to help staff members recognize, resist, and report abusive behaviors directed at that youth.
2. The second perspective is from that of an employee or volunteer responsible for helping the camp deliver a high-quality camp program and setting the boundaries for appropriate behavior in staff relations with campers, leaders, and other staff members.

Distribute *Camp Leadership—Youth Protection Begins With You*, No. 34227. The Boy Scouts of America will not tolerate any form of child abuse in any phase of the program and will report all offenses to the proper authorities.

Indicate that Youth Protection is a very serious matter in the BSA, and camp staff needs to be thoroughly trained and educated about Youth Protection issues. Emphasize that staffs are unlikely to encounter many situations of neglect and abuse, but they do need to recognize signs of any abuse and clearly understand the procedures of reporting the abuse according to BSA policies and local government regulations.

Four Kinds of Abuse

There are four kinds of child abuse. Caution should be used in determining if abuse is occurring. One sign does not necessarily mean that abuse is taking place. Any questions about symptoms that are observed should be addressed to the camp director, not to others on the staff.

1. Neglect

Neglect is omission of a child’s basic needs. Possible signs of neglect include:

- The physical condition of the child or his clothing
- The child’s lack of cleanliness
- Child always hungry

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves verbal or nonverbal violence toward a child where the child receives information that he is “not good” and “never will be.” Possible signs of emotional abuse include:

- Thinking he is to blame for anything that goes wrong
- Sucking his thumb
- Rocking back and forth, especially his head
- Acting depressed

Note: An adult at camp may cause this kind of abuse by giving negative feedback to the boy. Swearing and abusive language may also cause emotional abuse to a camper or another staff member, and is very un-Scoutlike. It is not to be tolerated.

3. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves physical violence toward a child where the parent or other adult is not in control, is under stress, or has little impulse control. Such abuse may be due to excessive corporal punishment. It could also occur in a situation such as initiations or hazing. It is nonaccidental injury caused by punching, kicking, beating, biting, burning, or otherwise harming the child.

Note: Never touch a youth when you are angry.

Some possible signs of physical abuse include:

- Bruises on areas of the body that don't normally bruise, like the back of the arms or legs. Sometimes they have distinctive shapes indicating the weapon used on the child. They also may be different colors as they are in different stages of healing.
- Cigar or cigarette burns, especially on the soles of the feet, palms of the hands, or back. There could also be rope burns or burns that leave the shape of the instrument used, such as an iron.
- Unexplained fractures, spiral fractures, or multiple fractures.
- Lacerations and abrasions that appear in unusual places like the backs of arms, legs, or torsos.

4. Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation

Sexual abuse involves any sexual act between a child and an adult, or a young child and a significantly older child. Fondling is sexual abuse. The child is powerless and is not in a position to defend against or responsibly consent to sexual interaction.

Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

- Age-inappropriate understanding of sex
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Fear of being with someone in camp
- Inappropriate sex play
- Suggestive drawings
- Fear of being touched

Larger youth, and significantly older youth with a leadership or authority role, can be perpetrators of this type of abuse.

The possibility of child abuse occurring in BSA camps is highest in units with marginal leadership. In order to provide the most successful camp experience for the youth in such units and to reduce the stress that their leaders may feel, these units need to be monitored closely.

Camp directors should be alert for those units coming to camp with unit leaders who are “lone rangers” and do not participate fully in the program of the camp. Camp staff should be encouraged to make frequent visits to such units to ensure that the Scouts in those units receive the full benefit of the program, as well as being alert to the possibility of abuse. Being alert for possible child abuse must be done with sensitivity.

As staff members observe campers, please remember that one sign or indicator is not proof that a child is being abused. It is, however, reason to observe the child.

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse

Emphasize the specific procedures in responding to suspected child abuse or signs of abuse in camp. If a staffer suspects that a child is being abused at camp or has been abused at some time prior to camp, the staffer needs to report it immediately to the **camp director**. Also, this information is not to be shared with other staff members, leaders, or campers. Camp directors must follow their council guidelines on reporting alleged abuse. In most cases, camp directors will notify the Scout executive.

Review the four parts of responding to suspected child abuse in camp:

1. Disclosure or Discovery

- Listen.
- Resist disbelief.
- Do not promise secrecy.
- Determine steps that need to be taken.
- Contact the Scout executive.

If a youth tells a staffer he has been abused:

- Don't panic.
- Don't overreact.
- Don't criticize the boy.
- Listen carefully.
- Reassure the boy.
- Report this conversation to the camp director.

2. Safety of the Child

- **Safety:** Ensure safety of the child. In some instances, separating the child from others may be necessary.
- **Privacy:** Be careful to keep the matter private; however, follow Youth Protection policies and do not put yourself in a one-on-one situation without other staff leaders present.
- **Supervision:** Make sure the child is not left alone and that he does not feel abandoned. Keep the child safe and comfortable throughout the entire process.

3. Reporting

- A. The local council Scout executive is the key person for handling cases of child abuse discovered in conjunction with a Scouting activity. The Scout executive must be notified immediately if abuse is suspected in the Scouting program. The Scout executive in every council has initiated contact with the proper authorities and has established procedures. Your Scout executive will be able to guide you in the proper steps to take.
- B. Each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have different reporting requirements. The intent of most state laws is clear—suspected child abuse must be reported as soon as it is suspected. Failure to do so may result in civil or criminal penalties. Each Scouting council needs to check with the state in which its camp is located to determine the reporting requirements for that state. These reporting requirements should be incorporated into the council policies and procedures and be reviewed as part of the camp staff training.
- C. Concern is often expressed over the potential for criminal or civil liability if a report of suspected abuse is found to be unsubstantiated. All states provide immunity from liability to reporters of suspected child abuse. The only requirement that states make is that the report be made in good faith.

Points to remember:

- Notify the camp director immediately.
- Follow council policies as well as local and state laws and procedures.
- Following the direction of the Scout executive on who should be informed, such as camp staff; pack, troop, and crew leaders; and parents.
- Keep allegations strictly confidential, with as few people involved and as little discussion as possible.
- Do not discuss any information with the media.

4. Continuance of Camp Program

Remember that the camp program should continue without interruption. Other campers and staff members should be involved in the camp program and, in most cases, would not even be aware of the child abuse incident.

Barriers to Child Abuse

In terms of those who are the child abusers, remember that popular stereotypes are not accurate. While sexual abuse knows no socioeconomic boundaries, other forms of abuse tend to occur more often in families experiencing the stress of poverty and lack of education. There is no known scientific method for identifying child abusers before abuse occurs. Essential to camp protection strategies is the creation of barriers to child abuse built into the program. The Boy Scouts of America has adopted several such policies that must be reflected in the camp program.

Refer to the “Barriers to Child Abuse” section of the brochure. This set of strategies applies in a camp setting. These barriers have been adopted to provide additional security for youths in the program. In addition, they serve to protect adult leadership from situations in which they are vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

These barriers represent the long-standing commitment that the Boy Scouts of America has in ensuring the protection of our youth. Adherence to these guidelines greatly minimizes the opportunity for abuse to occur within the BSA program.

Cameras and Imaging Devices

While many campers, leaders, and staff use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become easy to use these devices to invade individuals’ privacy. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants.

Personal Safety Awareness

Another important aspect of training for youth camp staff members is establishing boundaries for their own relationships with campers and with other members of the staff. Serving on a camp staff places youths in role model positions that can lead to abusive situations. In addition, staff members need to understand that their relationships with each other—even during times when not on duty—reflects on the camp and the Scouting program, and their behavior needs to conform to standards set by the Scout Oath and Law.

Youth staff members are still maturing and do not have the judgment and decision-making skills that we would expect of an adult. This can lead otherwise good staff members to lapses in prudence resulting in unintended consequences to themselves, campers, or the camp.

Personal safety awareness for staff members includes:

1. Specific policies for reporting any suspected abuse
2. Guidelines for youth staff members’ personal behavior during camp
3. Guidelines for use of cell phones and other technology at camp
4. Fraternalization policies for relationships with campers
5. Expectations for social relationships among staff members on-duty and off

Review extra handouts in the Learner’s Supplement. See the pages that day camp directors may use to train their staff in Youth Protection. Explain to the resident camp program directors that the training material may be used as resource material to assist the resident camp directors in training their staff if needed.

Review Resident Camp standard M10 (may change for 2008).