

YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Training for Volunteer Leaders and Parents



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



Contents

Introduction	2
Background Information on Child Abuse	3
Signs of Child Abuse	4
Signs of Emotional Abuse and Neglect	4
Signs of Physical Abuse	4
Signs of Sexual Abuse	4
Normal vs. Abnormal Behaviors	5
Cub Scout-Age Boys	5
Boy Scout-Age Boys	5
Effects of Stress	6
Child Abusers—Who Are They?	7
Child Molesters	7
Youth Protection Policies of the Boy Scouts of America	8
Leadership	8
Creating External Barriers	8
Parental Involvement	9
Helping the Child Resist	10
The Three R's of Youth Protection	10
The Child's Bill of Rights	10
Disclosure	10
Reporting Requirements	12
Summary	13

Introduction

The problem of child abuse has become one of the most significant social problems facing our nation. Recent public opinion polls rank the problem of child abuse second only to drug abuse as a national concern. Your participation in this training not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

The Boy Scouts of America has identified child abuse as one of five unacceptables on which to focus its resources. These societal problems also include hunger, illiteracy, teenage unemployment, and drug abuse. With nearly 20 percent of American youth coming into contact with the BSA's program each year, no other single organization matches our ability to have an impact on these problems and to provide this country's families with information necessary to protect children from those who would victimize them.

In addition to helping families address the problem of child abuse, the Boy Scouts of America is exemplary among youth-serving agencies in recognizing the potential threat that child abuse poses to young people and has adopted a comprehensive set of policies and procedures designed to ensure that Scouting continues to be safe for all participants.

Guiding the BSA's Youth Protection program is the following five-point strategy to prevent child abuse:

1. Educating Scouting volunteers, parents, and Scouts to aid in the detection and prevention of child abuse
2. Establishing leader-selection procedures to prevent offenders from entering the BSA leadership ranks
3. Establishing policies that create barriers to child abuse within the program
4. Encouraging Scouts to report improper behavior in order to identify offenders quickly
5. Swift removal and reporting of alleged offenders

One of the objectives of this training program is to help you understand your role in implementing the five points of this strategy.

In addition to understanding your role, it is important for you to remember that anytime child abuse is suspected in Scouting, the Scout executive must be contacted immediately. The Scout executive in every council has established contacts with the child protective and law enforcement agencies within the council area and knows the proper procedures to follow to ensure that any allegations of child abuse will be reported to the proper authorities.

After completing this training, you should be able to

- Identify suspected child abuse, and know what your responsibilities are if you suspect abuse.
- Understand the policies of the Boy Scouts of America promulgated to protect our youth members from abuse and to assist our adult leaders in avoiding situations in which they would be vulnerable to unfounded accusations of abuse.
- Respond appropriately if a child discloses abuse to you.
- Assist the chartered organization to conduct its Scouting program within the Youth Protection guidelines of the BSA.

Your participation in this training will satisfy the Youth Protection training prerequisite for your participation in many Boy Scout activities such as leadership at national jamborees or attendance at National Camping School.

On behalf of the BSA, we want you to know that your assistance in helping to combat the serious societal problem of child abuse is deeply appreciated.

Background Information on Child Abuse

Child abuse is a tragedy that affects 2-3 percent of American children each year. It has been increasing and now more than 2.4 million reports of child abuse are received each year.

By definition, child abuse is harm to a child which occurs immediately or through accumulated effects over a period of time. When the harm is caused by withholding life's necessities from a child it is classified as *neglect*. The ability to provide such necessities as food, clothing, education, and medical care but failing to do so is the factor separating neglect from the effects of poverty.

There are three additional kinds of child abuse caused by commission of acts against the child—emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse occurs when the child is consistently being told that he is no good and never will be. Denigrating name-calling is a form of emotional abuse.

Physical abuse is the bodily injury of a child by the child's parent or caretaker.

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between children when there is an unequal distribution of power such as when one is significantly older or larger.

Child abuse occurs in every segment of our society. Child neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse occur more frequently in undereducated, poorer families, while child sexual abuse is more evenly distributed throughout society.

Signs of Child Abuse

Child abuse affects children in different ways, therefore the signs of abuse listed will not be true of all abused children. In fact, some abused children may not exhibit any outward signs of their victimization. In others, there may be either physical or behavioral signs that a child has been abused and in some cases both.

Signs of Emotional Abuse and Neglect

Child neglect and emotional abuse are the most difficult kinds of child maltreatment to substantiate. The indicators are subtle and ambiguous. Physical signs include lagging physical development and habit disorders such as thumb sucking or rocking. Neglected children may show up at Scout meetings inappropriately dressed, lacking personal hygiene, and consistently hungry.

Both neglected or emotionally abused children may exhibit signs of childhood stress. Such signs are ambiguous and may be explained by other events in the child's life. When signs of childhood stress are observed by Scouting leaders it is important to remember that abuse is only one of several possible causes.

Signs of Physical Abuse

Most children as they participate in the normal activities of childhood accumulate their share of cuts, scrapes, and bruises. The outward signs of physical abuse are not typical of the normal "wear and tear" of childhood. Indicators of physical abuse are unusual bruises, burns, breaks, lacerations, and abrasions.

- **Bruises.** A physically abused child may have bruises on his or her abdomen or back—areas of the body not usually bruised in normal childhood activities. In cases of repeated abuse, the bruises may be of different colors indicating various stages of healing. Bruises may have distinctive shapes indicating the weapon used to attack the child.

- **Burns.** Unusual burns such as cigarette or cigar burns on the soles of the feet, palms of the hands, the back, or the genital areas are strong indicators of abuse. Other burns that are strong indicators of abuse are friction or tether burns on the wrists, ankles, or neck caused by ropes used to tie the child. Wet burns on the hands and ankles that appear to be glovelike or socklike are caused by immersion in hot liquids such as forcing a child to bathe in water that is too hot. Dry burns leave distinctive marks in the shape of the instrument used to inflict them such as electric irons, radiator grates, or stove burners.
- **Fractures.** Unexplained fractures are cause for concern. A child with multiple fractures in various stages of healing is almost certain to be a victim of physical abuse. Other signs include swollen or tender limbs and spiral fractures caused by forceful jerking of the arms.
- **Lacerations and abrasions.** Injuries that children incur during normal play activities are generally located on the leading edges of the body's planes such as shins, knees, palms, and elbows. When found on the soft tissues of the abdomen, on the back, on the backs of arms and legs, or external genitalia, lacerations and abrasions strongly suggest physical abuse, as do human bite marks especially when they are recurrent and appear to be adult size.

As in other forms of abuse, a child who has been physically abused may exhibit signs of general childhood stress after the physical manifestations of abuse heal.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Physical evidence of sexual abuse, if present at all, tends to be temporary. Such signs may include difficulty in walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underwear; pain or itching in the genital area; bruises or bleeding of the external genitalia; and, sexually transmitted diseases.

Behavioral indicators may be present for a longer period of time and be more conspicuous. Specific behaviors associated with child sexual abuse are

- Age-inappropriate understanding of sex
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Persistent and inappropriate sex play with peers or toys
- Prostitution
- Wearing lots of clothing, especially to bed
- Drawings with genitals
- Fear of touch
- Abuse of animals
- Masturbation in public
- Nightmares or night terrors
- Apprehension when subject of sexual abuse is brought up
- Cross-dressing

The presence of any of these indicators should cause consideration of the possibility that sexual abuse has occurred. They are not, in and of themselves, conclusive evidence that the child has been victimized.

Normal vs. Abnormal Behaviors

Parents and individuals working with children need to understand the growth processes that children experience as they mature from child to young adult. Such knowledge is critical to distinguishing troublesome, but normal, behavior from that which is indicative of serious problems. Understanding why children and adolescents do what they do may also prevent overreacting by parents and leaders that sometimes results in abusive situations.

Cub Scout-Age Boys

Cub Scout-age boys (6- to 10-year-olds), at the beginning of this age must adapt to the school environment. For the first time in their lives children are faced with having to work cooperatively, follow directions, work independently, and be able to concentrate. It is expected that as the child becomes older, greater skills will be developed in each of these areas.

It is during this age that children need to develop friendships which constitute closer relationships than they had with playmates at an earlier age. At around 8 years of age, children begin to form peer groups and participate in group activities such as athletics, church groups, and other organized activities. Children who are isolated, withdrawn, and seemingly without friends are cause for concern.

Because of the new experiences sustained by boys in this age group a sense of self is developed. If, for the most part, their experiences are positive they will have a positive self-image and will believe that they will be successful as they approach new people or new situations. If they experience frustrations or failure in mastering their environment, they will likely lack self-confidence and self-esteem. Such children are more susceptible to becoming victims of abuse. Also, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem may be caused by abuse.

Boy Scout-Age Boys

Boy Scout-age boys (10- to 17-year-olds) sustain major transitions in their physical and emotional development which may cause episodes of depression, aggression, sudden mood shifts, withdrawal, immature or regressive behavior, and other behaviors associated with stress. Some of the changes experienced by this age youth make the child vulnerable to abuse as well.

Puberty occurs during the early part of this period. Puberty brings not only physical maturation, but also causes emotional changes and changes in social relationships. It is almost the paradox of youth that adolescents are expected to seek greater independence and autonomy while parents are appropriately concerned about setting boundaries to that independence. This can lead to conflict between adolescent and parent that can escalate into abusive situations—both emotional and physical. The desire for independence may also discourage an adolescent from seeking assistance from parents when a decision made by the youth has harmful results.

During this time, the adolescent is also trying to define who he is, or is forming a self-identity. For a child who has been abused, that self-identity may be one of a loser or victim—roles that are not constructive and reflect his low self-esteem. Many adolescents experiment with several different roles. While this experimentation is normal, it can lead to the adolescent being taken advantage of and exploited by unscrupulous adults who show an interest in and who reinforce unrealistic roles in order to take advantage of the naivete of the youth.

Peer groups become important in the life of an adolescent. As he strives to become more independent from parental control, the adolescent becomes more involved with friends—often a group of friends—who have a strong influence over decisions he makes, becoming almost a surrogate family.

Effects of Stress

Growing up is a stressful process. Whether it is the anxiety experienced by a 6-year-old going to school on the first day or the shaky knees of the teenager going on his first date, all of these changes are to some degree stressful. The stress may be compounded when other circum-

stances exist such as family turmoil or divorce, problems in school, or problems in social relationships. This stress may cause reactions such as the following:

- Bed-wetting
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Immature or regressive behavior
- Clinging behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal
- Substance abuse
- Inability to concentrate
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Running away
- Depression
- Talk of or attempts at suicide
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Frequent illnesses

Such signs are symptomatic of childhood stress and may be caused by any of the kinds of problems we have discussed, including child abuse. If any of these persist over a prolonged period of time, it is reason to be concerned and the behavior needs to be looked into.

Child Abusers—Who Are They?

While abusers tend to defy any kind of orderly profile that would facilitate their easy identification, there are some general factors that are associated with various kinds of abuse. Child abusers tend to be individuals with low self-esteem. Their own needs are so overwhelming that they are poorly equipped to meet the needs of their children. Ignorance about children and children's needs is also a factor in some child abuse cases. Often children who are neglected have parents who abuse drugs or alcohol. Emotional abusers may have unreal expectations of the child and malign the child when the child fails to meet those expectations.

Physical abuse can occur when the pressures experienced by the caretaker or parent seem to be insurmountable and the child does something that triggers physical violence—the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. Physical abuse can also happen when physical punishment becomes extreme or exaggerated. Oftentimes, physical abuse can be avoided when the individual realizes the need for time out and has someone to provide respite care of the children for a brief period.

Child Molesters

Individuals who sexually abuse children are known as child molesters. Just as with other kinds of abusers, child molesters do not fit into any convenient profile. There are a number of stereotypes that have been developed that are misleading and false. Perhaps the most dangerous myth is that child molesters are usually strangers to their victims. The truth is that child molesters are known by their victims prior to the abuse occurring in all but a small number of cases.

Most child molesters are ordinary-appearing people. It is not unusual for a child molester to occupy a position of respect in the community. Child molesters may be professionals such as physicians, school teachers, clergymen, or public officials. It is often difficult to accept the notion that such prominent individuals violate society's taboos and engage in sexual activity with children.

As difficult as it is for us to accept the possibility of non-family members sexually abusing children, it is much more difficult to accept the fact that family members sexually abuse children. Until recently, it was assumed that sexual abuse of family members, or incest, was different from nonincestuous abuse and that incest offenders are not dangerous to society as a whole. In recent studies of incest offenders by Dr. Gene Abel, 49 percent of incestuous fathers and stepfathers abused children beyond their own family while they were sexually abusing their own child. Studies indicate that most sexual abuse of boys occurs outside the family.

About 10 percent of child molestation is perpetrated by women. Because the stereotypical child molester is male, when molestation by a woman is reported, the report may be perceived to lack credibility. Children who report that they have been molested by a woman need to have that report given the same attention as if the alleged molester was a man.

Children also molest other children. About a third of sexual molestation is committed by adolescents on other children. Oftentimes the significance of such activity is minimized. Anytime children are involved in sexual activity in which there is an unequal distribution of power, or if an element of force is involved, that activity needs to be viewed as potentially serious and a referral made to a mental health program with programs for adolescent sex offenders.

To summarize, while most child molesters are adult males, adolescents and women also may be involved in child molestation. Child molesters defy any of the common stereotypes and have the same characteristics as the general population. Because of this, it is extremely difficult to identify individuals who constitute a threat to our children.

Youth Protection Policies of the Boy Scouts of America

Dr. David Finkelhor, preeminent researcher on child abuse has identified four preconditions for child sexual abuse to occur, as follow:

1. There must be an offender with the motivation to sexually abuse.
2. The molester must overcome internal inhibitions against abusing.
3. The molester must overcome external barriers to abusing.
4. The molester must overcome resistance by the child.

The Boy Scouts of America has adopted a number of policies that ensure that these preconditions are not present within Scouting.

Leadership

The Boy Scouts of America takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. There have been many instances in which the standards for adult registration have been challenged and each time these standards have been upheld. Being a registered leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our youth members require that selection of leaders be taken seriously and we work closely with our chartered organizations to help recruit the best possible leadership for their units.

We assist our chartered organizations in securing qualified Cubmasters, Scoutmasters, and Coaches through the "Six Sure Steps" for leader selection. These steps are outlined in guides provided at no charge from your council. In addition, the BSA has an 18-minute video, *Ventures III*, which provides specific guidance for leadership selection by heads of chartered organizations, chartered organization representatives, and organizing and unit committees.

Another tool that has been provided to chartered organizations is the adult leader application. The application requests background information that should be checked by the unit committee or chartered organization before

accepting the applicant for unit leadership. We all realize that there is no sure way to detect a child molester—or for that matter any kind of child abuser—in advance of attempted or actual abuse. We can minimize the risk by learning all we can about applicants for leadership positions—his or her experience with children; what motivates the individual to want to be a Scout leader; and, how he or she would handle discipline. We can also convey the message that the Scouting program is a hostile environment for individuals who want to abuse children. By getting this message across, would-be abusers will be discouraged from trying to participate in Scouting.

Unit leader selection committees should notify the Scout executive anytime they turn down an applicant due to questionable conduct discovered through their background check. In this way the individual can be prevented from becoming involved in other Scouting activities.

Creating External Barriers

After selecting the best possible leaders, further protections for children are structured into the program. The following policies 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.

- **Two-deep leadership.** Two registered adult leaders or one registered adult 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. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities. This requirement applies to the activities of the Order of the Arrow as well as provisional unit activities.
- **No one-on-one contact.** One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, such as a Scoutmaster's confer-

ence, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths.

- **Respect of privacy.** Adult leadership needs to respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing into swimming suits or taking showers at camp and intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires. They also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- **Separate accommodations.** When camping, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his own parent or guardian. Councils are strongly encouraged to have separate shower and latrine facilities for females and when separate facilities are not available, times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers.
- **Proper preparation for high-adventure activities.** Activities with elements of risk should never be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.
- **No secret organizations.** There are no "secret" organizations recognized by the Boy Scouts of America. All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents 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 never permitted.
- **Hazing prohibited.** Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any Scouting activity.

- **Junior leader training and supervision.** Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by junior leaders and see that BSA policies are followed.

Adherence to these policies not only enhances the protection of our membership, but ensures that the basic values of Scouting are preserved. Local councils are prepared to assist units in implementing these policies: for example, sharing leadership between units if two-deep leadership for campouts is a problem. All of these policies are designed to create barriers to abuse within the Scouting program.

Parental Involvement

Parents participate in the protection of their children in several ways. In Scouting, parents are encouraged to accept leadership responsibilities, participate in outings and camping trips, and be willing to assist with unit activities. All parents receive important information concerning Scouting as part of their son's application form. This information is provided so that the parent can detect any deviation from the BSA's program and call it to the attention of the chartered organization or local council.

Parents need to help their children realize that the parents are resources for help in solving personal problems. In this way, children feel freer to let their parents know of attempted or actual abuse. *How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse and Drug Abuse: A Parent's Guide*, found in the front of Cub Scout and Boy Scout handbooks, has exercises for parents and children to do together, which fosters this sense of open communication.

Helping the Child Resist

When a child feels threatened with the possibility of being sexually abused, he needs to know that any resistance on his part will be sufficient to discourage most child molesters. This is part of the message that the Boy Scouts of America includes in our Youth Protection education program for our members and their families.

The Three R's of Youth Protection

Members of the Boy Scouts of America are taught the Three R's of Youth Protection. This stresses that the child needs to **RECOGNIZE** situations that place him at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone can be a molester. The child needs to know that if he **RESISTS**, most child molesters will leave him alone. And, if the child **REPORTS** attempted or actual molestations he will help protect himself as well as other children from further abuse, and will not be blamed for what occurred.

The Child's Bill of Rights

Specific resistance methods are emphasized in the Child's Bill of Rights. This teaches that when a child is confronted with a situation that he thinks is dangerous, he has the right to

- Trust his own instincts or feelings.
- Expect privacy.
- Withhold information that could place him in danger.
- Refuse gifts.
- Say no to unwanted touching or affection.
- Say no to inappropriate demands and requests from adults.
- Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants.
- Run, scream, make a scene.
- Physically fight off unwanted advances.
- Ask for help.

The Three R's of Youth Protection and the Child's Bill of Rights are reflected in the removable supplement, *How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse and Drug Abuse: A Parent's Guide*, found in the front of all Cub Scout and Boy Scout handbooks (and in the current edition of the *Scoutmaster Handbook*.) All boys joining a Boy Scout troop must satisfy the Scoutmaster that they have completed the exercises in the parent's guide with either their parents or with another trusted adult.

The BSA has produced a video (available at no charge from your district executive or local council service center) for use at Boy Scout troop or Varsity Scout team meetings, *A Time to Tell*, that also conveys the message of the Three R's of Youth Protection and helps teach resistance, as do frequent articles in *Boys' Life* magazine dealing with child abuse.

Disclosure

An almost universal reaction that adults have when discussing the subject of child sexual abuse is questioning how the child can allow the adult to perpetrate molestation and then not disclose the abuse. Dr. Roland Summit, noted psychiatrist and authority on the impact of child sexual abuse on the victim, has identified five elements, as follow:

1. **Secrecy.** Secrecy is a necessary condition for a person to be sexually abused. It is through secrecy that the child is both intimidated and comforted. The abuser will often state to the child, "This will be our secret" or even, "If you tell anyone, I'll kill you," or "I'll kill your dog." A clear message is given that if another person finds out, something bad will happen. On the other hand, the child can take some comfort in the notion that if no one finds out, everything will be all right.

The average child, according to Dr. Summit never asks and never tells. Based upon surveys of adult survivors of child sexual abuse, the majority never told anyone during their childhood of their molestation. They feared blame and retaliation.

In teaching children the Three R's of Youth Protection, we need to be sure the child hears that if he is unsuccessful at avoiding abuse he should still report abuse and that he will not be blamed. Too much emphasis on resisting may result in the child erroneously shouldering the responsibility for what occurred.

2. **Helplessness.** Adults are given inherent power over children in our society. We are comfortable with the idea that the child molester is a stranger hanging out around playgrounds and have given children the power to resist strangers. We are less comfortable—in fact very uncomfortable—with the fact that a child is three times more likely to be molested by a trusted adult, often with a degree of authority over the child, than by a stranger. In such relationships, the child has no power to consent, particularly if the offender is one to whom the child must look for food, clothing, and shelter.
3. **Adjustment.** For the child within a dependent relationship, sexual molestation is typically not a one-time occurrence. In such a case, the child will learn to adjust to the abuse. Part of the adjustment will be to levy self-blame and accept misplaced responsibility for the molestation. The male victim is likely to turn his rage at his helplessness outward in aggressive and antisocial behavior.
4. **Delayed, conflicted, and unconvincing disclosure.** As previously mentioned, the majority of child sexual abuse is never disclosed. Disclosure is usually the outgrowth of overwhelming conflict with the abuser, incidental discovery by a third party, or sensitive outreach and community education by youth-serving agencies. In the case of conflict between the child and molester, often the complaint is disregarded because of the circumstances in which it was made. A child of any age is faced with skepticism when complaining of sexual molestation. An adolescent may be faced not only with skepticism but humiliation and punishment as well.

5. **Retraction.** When faced with disbelief from the adult to whom he has turned for help, the normal thing for the victim to do is to withdraw the allegation and restore the lie that the abuse did not take place.

By understanding these factors we can be guided in how we respond when a child discloses abuse.

Considering the prevalence of abuse and the educational programs that increase children's awareness about sexual molestation, you may someday have a member of your unit tell you that someone has molested him. If this happens, you must be prepared to help the child. Follow the guidelines below if a child indicates that he or she may have been the victim of abuse or exploitation:

- **DON'T** panic or overreact to the information disclosed by the child.
- **DON'T** criticize the child.
- **DO** respect the child's privacy. Take the child to a private place away from other children (but within sight of others). Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to him and that you would like to get him some help. Do not promise to keep his secret, as it will be necessary to make a report to the Scout executive. The Scout executive will advise you of the responsibility to report to child protective services or to a law enforcement agency. You may want to ask if he has talked with his parents about the abuse—if a parent was not the alleged abuser.
- **DO** encourage the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or Explorer to tell the appropriate authorities. You may do this by making sure the child feels that he or she is not to blame for what happened. Tell the child that no one should ask him or her to keep a special secret and that it is OK to talk about what happened with appropriate adults—that the child will not be blamed.
- **DO** keep it strictly confidential. Discussing allegations of child abuse with others may result in a lawsuit for defamation of character. Take your guidance from the Scout executive or the child protection authorities to whom you reported.

Reporting Requirements

Anytime you suspect child abuse in Scouting, you are required to inform the Scout executive.

Each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have different reporting requirements. Many of these jurisdictions require child care professionals to report suspected child abuse and in some states, reporting laws have been interpreted to require reporting by adults in volunteer child care positions. You should receive your council's procedures for reporting child abuse as part of this training. If you did not receive them, contact your local council service center.

No state requires that the person making the report must have proof that abuse has occurred prior to making the report, only that it is suspected. The intent of most state laws is clear—they expect suspected child abuse to be reported as soon as it is suspected. Failure to do so may result in civil or criminal penalties.

Concern is often expressed over the potential for criminal or civil liability if a report of abuse is made that subsequently is found to be unsubstantiated. All states provide immunity from liability to those who report suspected child abuse. The only requirement states make is that the report is made "in good faith." Some states make the presumption that a reporter is making the report in good faith.

As a volunteer in Scouting, you are cautioned that you are not an investigator and that the investigation of allegations of abuse is best left to the trained investigator. Action on reports of suspected child abuse may be facilitated by working through the Scout executive who has established a working relationship with the administrators of the child protective services program and law enforcement agencies in the council.

The Boy Scouts of America will not tolerate any form of child abuse in its program and will take all necessary steps to remove any offenders from membership in the BSA.

Each state has an agency designated to be the central reporting authority for child abuse within that state. The staff of these agencies may be available to provide additional information and training to Scouting leaders. Additional sources of assistance can be provided from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN); P.O. Box 1182; Washington, DC 20013.

Summary

The Boy Scouts of America has identified the societal problem of child abuse as one of five unacceptables. We have adopted a five-point strategy to guide our Youth Protection program. The five points are:

1. **Educating Scouting volunteers, parents, and Scouts to aid in the detection and prevention of child abuse.** This training is a key element in the educational program of the BSA. In addition, information is provided to members and their families through publications and video.
2. **Leader-selection procedures to prevent individuals from entering the BSA.** The adult leader application process requires relevant information that is reviewed by the chartered organization before the applicant is registered into unit. The National Council Registration Review process screens applicants against a list of individuals known to be ineligible for membership.
3. **Establishing policies that create barriers to child abuse within the program.** BSA has adopted various policies listed on pages 00-00 to guide the interaction of adult and youth members.
4. **Encouraging Scouts to report improper behavior in order to identify offenders quickly.** Through stressing the Three R's of Youth Protection, members are encouraged to report attempted or actual abuse.
5. **Swift removal and reporting of alleged offenders.** Anytime abuse is suspected in Scouting, the alleged offender will not be eligible to participate in the program until completely exonerated of the accusations. The Scout executive is responsible for reporting all suspected abuse to the proper authorities irrespective of whether the person making the allegations to him reports to the authorities.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE IN THE ATLANTA AREA COUNCIL

Reports of child abuse may come in many forms. They may be in the form of a conversation, phone calls, or letters (either anonymous or with the person making the report identified).

The most important thing to remember is that all reports must be forwarded immediately to the Scout Executive of the Atlanta Area Council. (Phone 404/577-4810).

All allegations should be kept strictly confidential, with as few people involved and as little discussion about the matter as possible.

Under the Georgia Code (Law) any youth service agency volunteer "having reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him... or has been sexually assaulted or sexually exploited shall report or cause reports to be made in accordance with this code section." "An oral report shall be made as soon as possible by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested." The code further provides "immunity from liability" for reporting.

The agencies of government, which under Georgia Law, are charged with investigative powers in child abuse are the Department of Family and Children Services (D.F.C.S.) and the District Attorney in each county. The Scout Executive is required to report child abuse to these agencies.