

# YOUTH PROTECTION

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## THE CUB SCOUT LEADER'S ROLE

**C**hild abuse is an increasingly serious, widespread problem in society, affecting every ethnic group, socioeconomic level, and geographic area. The significance of this problem is revealed by the nearly 3 million cases of child abuse reported each year in the United States. The Boy Scouts of America has developed Youth Protection training to prepare its leadership to help children who have been, or are being, abused.

The training program includes information for parents as well as the video *It Happened to Me*. Materials are for use in pack and den meetings to show Cub Scouts—with their parents—what they should do to prevent sexual abuse from happening to them. In addition, the BSA has adopted a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to help ensure that Scouting continues to be safe for all participants. **Criminal background checks are required for all new leaders, and the adult application form requires that the applicant provide a Social Security number.**

As Cub Scout leader, you can help make the world safer for children in at least three ways:

1. **Increase your knowledge about child abuse** so that you will be in a better position to help protect the children in your life—your own sons and daughters, and children in your neighborhood, church, and community.

2. **Help others learn the steps that help them to protect themselves.** You can have a direct effect on the members of your pack and den by helping them learn ways to protect themselves.
3. **Implement the Youth Protection policies and procedures of the BSA within your unit.** By implementing these safety policies, you will help the Scouting program continue to be a safe environment for children.

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.

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Definitions of what constitutes child abuse vary, and state laws give the specific definition of child abuse for that state. (State definitions also establish the ages of children covered—generally those younger than 18 years of age.) A common definition of child abuse might be “the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child that can cause injury or psychological damage.”

## Four Types of Child Abuse

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

1. **Neglect** occurs when a caretaker fails to provide for a child's basic needs regarding, for instance, nutrition, nurturing, safety, education, and medical care.
2. **Emotional abuse** can include blaming, belittling, or rejecting a child; consistently treating brothers and sisters unequally; and a persistent lack of concern by a caretaker for the child's welfare.
3. **Physical abuse** is nonaccidental injury caused by punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, or otherwise harming a child. The injury might not have been intentional, but it was not accidental. An example of physical abuse is an injury caused by inappropriate discipline.
4. **Sexual abuse** occurs when the child is forced, manipulated, or tricked into sexual contact. Obscene telephone calls, fondling, intercourse, anal or oral sex, prostitution, and pornography are included. Child molesters commonly use adult pornography to reduce a child's resistance to sexual abuse. Showing pornography in any form to a child or permitting a child to have access to pornography is abusive. There are no legitimate reasons to show children, or to allow children to be shown, pornography. Most experts believe that sexual abuse is the most underreported form of abuse.

Often, when a child is abused or neglected, he or she might suffer from more than one kind of abuse; for example, a child who is being physically or sexually abused nearly always suffers from emotional abuse.

## INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

As a Cub Scout leader, you should be familiar with some of the indicators of child abuse. But also keep in mind that these indicators could have other meanings. If you detect these signs in a child in your Cub Scout pack or den, you should notify the Scout executive. You should not try to investigate yourself, but you must ensure that your suspicion is reported to the appropriate authorities.

Every child reacts to abuse differently. Some abused children show no signs of the abuse. Other children show only

slight behavioral indications that they have been abused; some will have extreme reactions.

The following are some of the clues that a child might have been abused.

## Indicators of Neglect and Emotional Abuse

Neglect and emotional abuse are the most difficult kinds of child maltreatment to detect. The clues are vague and uncertain. Neglected children might come to Cub Scout meetings inappropriately dressed, lacking in personal hygiene, or consistently hungry. Neglected or emotionally abused children might lag behind their peers in physical development and might demonstrate inappropriate behavior, such as rocking or thumb sucking. They might also show signs of childhood stress.

### Childhood Stress

Growing up is a stressful process. New experiences are to some degree stressful. When unfortunate situations in a child's life exist, such as family turmoil or divorce, school problems, or even the death of a beloved pet, the stress can cause the child's behavior to change. Child abuse and neglect are clearly causes of stress that can also lead to changes in behavior. The following behaviors can indicate harmful levels of stress in a child's life:

- 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, committing suicide
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Frequent illnesses

These signs could indicate stress and could be due to many different problems, including child abuse or neglect. If any of these behaviors is present for a prolonged period of time, you have reason to be concerned. You may express your concern to the child and offer your assistance.

## Indicators of Physical Abuse

Most children accumulate their share of childhood cuts, scrapes, and bruises. The injuries caused by abuse are not the same as this normal “wear and tear.” Indicators of physical abuse include unusual bruises, burns, broken bones, lacerations, and abrasions. The child might also exhibit signs of general childhood stress after the injuries of physical abuse heal.

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

**Burns.** An abused child might have unusual burns, such as cigarette or cigar burns on the soles of the feet, palms of the hand, the back, or the genital area.

**Broken bones.** Unexplained fractures are cause for concern. A child with multiple fractures in various stages of healing is almost certainly a victim of physical abuse. Other signs include swollen or tender arms and legs caused by forceful jerking of the arms.

**Lacerations and abrasions.** Normal play injuries generally affect the shins, knees, palms, and elbows. Lacerations and abrasions on the abdomen, back, backs of arms and legs, or genitalia are strong indicators of physical abuse. Human bite marks, especially if recurrent and appearing to be adult-sized, are also strong indicators of physical abuse.

## Indicators of Sexual Abuse

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

Behavioral indicators can be present for a longer period of time and could be more apparent. Here are some specific behaviors that might be associated with sexual abuse:

- Age-inappropriate understanding of sex
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Persistent and inappropriate sex play with peers or toys
- Wearing lots of clothing, especially to bed
- Drawings of genitalia
- Fear of touch
- Abuse of animals
- Masturbation in public

- Nightmares or night terrors
- Apprehension when the subject of sexual abuse is brought up
- Cross-dressing
- Prostitution

## WHO ARE THE CHILD ABUSERS?

Child abusers tend to defy any kind of consistent profile that would enable their easy identification; however, some factors are associated with certain kinds of abuse.

**Neglect.** *Drug and alcohol abuse* by parents or caregivers is increasingly common in cases of child neglect. Other factors include *ignorance of children’s needs* and *inadequate parenting practices*. The effects of poverty should not be confused with the neglect of children.

**Emotional Abuse.** Caregivers who emotionally abuse children often use *inappropriate disciplinary techniques*. They might have such overwhelming emotional needs of their own that they cannot cope with the needs of children in their care. Emotional abuse can be deeply rooted in a family’s history of successive generations being subjected to the same kinds of parenting practices.

**Physical Abuse.** Adults who inflict physical injury to children tend to have *low self-esteem*. They might be experiencing stress when the child does something that triggers physical violence. Physical abuse also occurs when spanking or other physical punishment becomes extreme or exaggerated. Some children might be targeting children, perhaps children with disabilities, whose care becomes difficult and causes the caregiver to lash out in frustration.

**Sexual Abuse.** Individuals who sexually abuse children are called child molesters. Some common misconceptions about child molesters are that they are “dirty old men” or “strangers.” A child molester could be anyone. Most are very ordinary in outward appearance. The fact that a child molester can occupy a position of respect in the community and is usually someone the victim knows—and is often someone close to the victim’s family—makes it difficult to accept the idea that he or she could be a molester.

Most child molesters are male; however, females commit approximately 10 percent of sexual molestation. Children who report that they have been molested by a woman need to have the same attention given to their report as would be given if the alleged molester were a man.

Children also are known to molest other children. About 30 percent of sexual molestation is committed by adolescents on other children. Often, the significance of this abuse is minimized. Any time children are involved in sexual activity in which there is an unequal distribution of power, or in which

force is involved, that activity must be viewed as potentially serious. It should be reported so that the molesting child can receive help, too.

## RESPONDING TO AN ABUSED CHILD

Considering the prevalence of child abuse and the increase in children's awareness of abuse—especially sexual abuse—you might someday have a member of your Cub Scout pack or den tell you that someone has molested him. If this happens, it means that the boy feels that you are a special individual—someone he trusts. The following guidelines should help you know how to respond:

1. **Do not panic or overreact** to the information the child discloses.
2. **Do not criticize** the child.
3. **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 has happened to him and that you would like to get him some help. You might want to ask him whether he has talked with his parents about the abuse—if his parents are not the alleged abusers.
4. **Do not promise to keep his secret** because you will have to make a report to the Scout executive. The Scout executive will advise you of your responsibility to make a report to child protective services or to a law enforcement agency.
5. **Do encourage the Cub Scout to tell the appropriate authorities.** Let him know that you understand he is not to blame for what happened. You should also let him know that he should not keep secrets that hurt him and that it is OK to talk with appropriate adults—they will not blame him for what happened.
6. **Do keep the disclosure of abuse strictly confidential,** telling only the Scout executive and child protection authorities. Take your guidance from them. Discussing allegations of child abuse with others can damage the reputations of innocent people.
7. **Do listen to the child,** but avoid questioning him about what happened. Interviewing the child is best left to professionals who are trained in investigating allegations of abuse and determining what crimes, if any, have occurred.

Any time 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. Your Scout executive has established contact with the proper authorities and can give you direction about requirements in your state for reporting abuse.

## BSA YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES

The BSA Youth Protection policies are based on strengthening the principles of Scouting and avoiding situations that could lead to abuse.

Adherence to BSA Youth Protection policies not only strengthens the protection of our membership, but also ensures that the basic values of Scouting are preserved.

### Leadership

The BSA has a tradition of recruiting quality volunteer leaders. 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 our leaders be taken seriously.

There is no sure way to detect a child molester—or any kind of abuser—in advance of attempted or actual abuse. We can minimize the risk by learning all we can about the adult applicant's experiences with children. The adult membership application is an important tool for helping to maintain BSA leadership standards. Learn why the applicant wants to be a Cub Scout leader and how the person would handle a discipline situation.

If your Cub Scout pack discovers questionable conduct on the part of someone who has applied for a leadership position, report this finding to the Scout executive so that the individual can be prevented from becoming involved in other Scouting activities.

If an individual already in your Cub Scout pack is alleged to have abused a child, he or she will have his or her membership revoked, and the alleged conduct will be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, individuals found to have abused children will be ineligible for any further affiliation with the BSA.

### Creating Barriers to Abuse

After selection of the best possible leaders, additional protection for children is built into the program. The BSA has adopted the following policies to provide security for youth in Scouting. The policies also provide protection for adult leaders against false 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 at least 21 years of age, are required on all trips and outings. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.

**No One-on-One Contact.** One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is not permitted in any situation that requires a personal conference. The meeting should take place 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 or taking showers at camp. Adults should intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. They should also 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.

**Proper Preparation for Activities.** All activities should consider the capabilities of the participating Cub Scouts. No activity should be undertaken without the proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.

**No Secret Organizations.** The BSA does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program. All activities are open to observation by parents and leaders.

**Appropriate Attire.** Proper clothing for activities is required.

**Constructive Discipline.** Discipline used in Cub 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.

**Background checks.** Background checks are required for all new leaders and the adult application form requires that the applicant provide a Social Security number.

## TRAINING LEADERS IN YOUTH PROTECTION

Youth Protection training is a part of every Cub Scout leader's basic training program. This training introduces the material contained in this chapter and reviews the Youth Protection policies of the BSA. Many councils provide youth protection

training on-line through their council Web sites. Leaders should check with their district or council for information on this effective youth protection training method.

A more in-depth Youth Protection training program is available for both volunteer leaders and parents. This training addresses Youth Protection issues more comprehensively than the overview in basic training and is based on the video *Youth Protection Guidelines: Training for Volunteer Leaders and Parents*, which is available through your local council. Contact your district executive or the local council service center for more information. This training session is required for all Cub Scout leader recognition awards.

The pack trainer or another leader in the pack may be assigned responsibility for Youth Protection training. This person would make sure that all registered adults receive current Youth Protection training and should also coordinate the education of parents in child abuse. The Cubmaster may also ask this person to help with the use of appropriate BSA videos and printed materials with youth members.

Youth Protection training is available online through your local council.

## EDUCATING YOUTH

Parents are a critical element in the education of Cub Scouts about child abuse. The BSA publishes a booklet, "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide," that is inserted in the front of the *Tiger Cub Handbook*, *Wolf Handbook*, *Bear Handbook*, and *Webelos Handbook*. This guide has exercises to be completed by the Cub Scout and his parent or guardian as part of the Bobcat requirements. These exercises are designed to open the lines of communication between the boy and his parent or guardian so that he will be more likely to report any abuse or attempted abuse.

BSA also has an award-winning video, *It Happened to Me*, for use by Cub Scout packs and dens. This DVD about child sexual abuse is available on DVD from your local council service center, and Cub Scout units should view it annually.

Power Pack Pals booklets are an additional resource for Cub Scout youth and are available from your local Scout shop. Current topics include Internet safety, how to deal with bullying, and personal safety.

# VIDEO INSTRUCTIONS AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Using the Youth Protection Video *It Happened to Me*

1. Obtain the video from your local council service center and review it. Invite members of the pack committee to review it with you.
2. If, after viewing this video about child sexual abuse, you decide that you would like support from individuals who are more informed about child abuse, help is often available from your local police department or child protective services agency.
3. Reserve a copy of the video for the date on which you plan to use it with your pack or den.
4. At least two weeks before showing the video to your unit, notify parents about the scheduled meeting and urge them to attend. (See the sample letter below for informing parents.) The video is intended for Cub Scout-age boys to watch only when their parents or guardians are present.
5. Before the meeting at which the video will be shown, review the leader's guide for the meeting on page 27-7) and become familiar with the issues to be emphasized in the discussion following the video's showing.
6. Show the video at a special pack or den meeting. (See the suggested agenda on page 27-7.)

## Sample Letter to Parents

Dear parent:

Child sexual abuse is so prevalent in American society that one in seven boys could be sexually abused before reaching adulthood; the percentage of sexually abused girls is even greater. The Boy Scouts of America has developed a comprehensive Youth Protection training program for leaders. By addressing the problem of child abuse in America, this training can help Scouting meet high standards of leadership and continue to provide a positive environment for our youth members.

You and your son are invited to a special \_\_\_\_\_ [pack/den] \_\_\_\_\_ meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ [date] \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ [time] \_\_\_\_\_, when we will show the video *It Happened to Me*. This award-winning video was produced by the Boy Scouts of America to educate Cub Scout-age boys about child sexual abuse and the steps boys should take to protect themselves from being sexually abused.

*It Happened to Me* is an important part of the BSA's Youth Protection training program. Each Cub Scout pack is encouraged to show the video to its members and their parents once a year. The video presents common situations in which sexual abuse might occur. The content of the video has been reviewed by professionals who are knowledgeable about child abuse and child development. The experts who reviewed it found it suitable for viewing by children as young as 6 years old.

We urge you to bring your son to the viewing of *It Happened to Me* so that you and he can watch it together. Child abuse professionals unanimously agree that open communication between parents and children is vital to preventing child abuse. This video is useful as a source of basic information, so your son might want to discuss it with you. Your viewing of this video will help to provide a common point of reference for subsequent conversations you and your son might have on this topic.

I hope that you will be able to join us on \_\_\_\_\_ [date] \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ [time] \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Cubmaster/Den Leader

## Suggested Agenda for the Meeting

1. Hold an opening ceremony.
2. Introduce the video *It Happened to Me*. Refer to the leader's guide (below) for points to use in the introduction.
3. Show the video.
4. Discussion: Refer to the leader's guide below for points to use.
5. Hold a closing ceremony.
6. Close.

## Leaders' Guide for the Meeting

### Introduction

"The video we are going to watch, *It Happened to Me*, will define child sexual abuse, and it will show you some of the ways children are put in situations in which they could be sexually abused. We all must understand that child sexual abuse is a serious problem. Children must learn ways that they can protect themselves if a person tries to sexually abuse them or their friends.

"Boys, nobody expects that you will be sexually abused. However, just as we learn other skills in case we ever need to use them, we also need to learn about how to prevent sexual abuse. As you watch this video, put yourselves in the positions of the boys who are the intended victims. Think about what you would do."

(Show the video *It Happened to Me*.)

### Discussion

*What is child sexual abuse?*

For a boy, child sexual abuse is unwanted touching, looking at, or taking a picture of his penis or other private body parts by an adult or older child. It also can be an adult or older child asking or forcing the boy to touch or look at the abuser's private parts.

*Who were the abusers in the video?*

—Mr. MacGregor at the day-care center

—Eddie, Ray's cousin

—Mark, a playground leader

—Mr. Johnson, Brad's former neighbor

—Phillip's baby-sitter, a 15-year-old girl

*When you think about sexual abuse, who do you think does-it?*

Answers might include "strangers" or "dirty old men." Point out that the abusers in the video were not strangers. Some were neighbors and some were even family members. Also, the abusers were of all ages, and one of the abusers was a young woman.

*What were some of the tricks the abusers used to try to sexually abuse the boys in the video?*

- Mr. MacGregor poured paint on Jake to get Jake to take off his clothes in order to clean up. The real reason was to get Jake to pose for pictures.
- Eddie bullied Ray and told him that he would be "real sorry" if he didn't do what Eddie wanted.
- Mark tricked Ty into staying late and accepting a ride home; then he showed Ty "dirty" pictures.
- Brad's former neighbor tricked him into climbing a tree and getting a trapped kitten. Point out that the kitten was not really trapped and that even if it had been, Mr. Johnson could have gotten the kitten himself.
- Phillip's baby-sitter tricked him into playing a game that resulted in her placing her hand down his pants.

Other tricks shown in the video include

- giving gifts in exchange for affection,
- blaming the boys—victims—for the sexual abuse,
- telling the boys that no one would believe them if they told,
- threatening to hurt the boys or a member of their family.

*What should you do if someone tries to sexually abuse you?*

All of the children should know to tell an adult they trust. They should understand that if sexual abuse happens, it is not their fault and no one will blame them. Parents should reinforce this notion. Ask the boys and their parents to take a minute to talk about whom the boy might tell if threatened by abuse.

*What are some of the safety rules to help avoid sexual abuse?*

- Before going out, tell your parent or other adult you trust where you are going, when you will be back, and who will be with you.
- Before getting into a car or going with anybody—even if you know the person—get permission from your parents or guardian. If your plans change, let your parents or guardian know. If you can't check with your parents or guardian, tell another adult whom you and your parents have agreed you can trust.

- When going places or playing outside, use the buddy system.
- If somebody tries to touch you in a way that is confusing or scary, say “No!” and then tell an adult you trust.
- If somebody touches you in a way that is not OK, *don’t keep it a secret*. Tell an adult you trust.
- Trust your feelings and talk to grown-ups about problems that are too big for you.
- It is never too late to ask for help.

*Whose fault is sexual abuse?*

Sexual abuse is always the fault of the abuser. Children should never be blamed for sexual abuse.

**Conclusion**

“The video has shown us a few ways that boys can be put in situations that might lead to sexual abuse. You need to know that most people will stop sexual abuse if you say ‘No!’ I want each of you to practice saying ‘No!’ as you would if you were afraid of being sexually abused. You should say it almost like a dog barks: ‘No!’—short and loud, but not shrill or screaming. When I count to three, say ‘No!’” [Have boys say it.] “One more time. And again.

“For parents, I want to call your attention to the BSA publication ‘How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent’s Guide,’ which is inserted in the front of each of the *Tiger Cub*, *Wolf*, *Bear*, and *Webeles* handbooks. This booklet contains more information about child abuse and includes some exercises that you and your son may discuss.

“Thank you all for participating in this meeting. If any of you want to use this video in your home with your family, it is available at the local council service center.”