



Scouts Australia NSW Fact Sheet

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Why use this Guide?

Being a Leader in Scouts Australia NSW is a privilege. The excellence of the Scout Program and the safety of our Youth Members require a high standard in adult leadership, and Scouts takes pride in the quality of its Leaders.

This Fact Sheet will:

- Outline the Scouts NSW Reporting Procedure if you suspect or are aware of any child protection or abuse issues.
- Outline What You Should Do if you're concerned that a Youth Member is being abused.
- Give you some Tips For Keeping Youth Members Safe in your care.
- Answer some Frequently Asked Questions about child abuse.

Scouts Doesn't Tolerate Abuse!

Scouts Australia NSW is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of its Members. Scouts has zero tolerance for abuse of any kind - physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse of its Members.

Report Child Protection Concerns and Abuse!

Scouts NSW works with NSW Police, NSW Community Services (formerly DoCS), the NSW Office of Children's Guardian, and other relevant authorities to address any child protection concerns.

All suspicions, concerns or allegations about criminal matters or child protection matters should be **reported directly** to the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner (Issues Management), the Chief Executive or the Child Protection Officer at State Office on 9735 9000. Once we receive a notification, the Association will make an immediate report to the relevant authorities.

If an individual has made a report to NSW Police, NSW Community Services, or another relevant authority, they should also report the matter to the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner (Issues Management), the Chief Executive or the Child Protection Officer. The Association will then make direct contact with the relevant authority.

Reports can also be made to: ChildProtection@nsw.scouts.com.au

Reporting to the Association enables the Association to work directly with the authorities in managing the matter. It enables the Association to take immediate action under its Behavioural Management Policy, in consultation with the authorities.

Imminent Danger

If a young person is in imminent danger, the matter should be reported directly and immediately to NSW Police on 131 444.

Are we “mandatory reporters”?

No.

Mandatory reporters are people who are legally required to report suspicions of child abuse to NSW Community Services. Scout Leaders are not mandatory reporters, but Scouts makes it compulsory for Leaders to report child protection concerns using the procedure outlined in this guide.

How Does Scouts Australia NSW protect Youth Members?

Scouts NSW has a number of screening processes in place to try to ensure that all Members are suitable for Membership with Scouts, and that they do not represent a danger to young people or the community.

Scouts Australia NSW screens its Leaders to prevent known offenders from becoming Leaders. It requires all Leaders to make declarations on the Application for Leader Form.

Under the new Working With Children Check (“WWCC”) requirements introduced in 2013, volunteers are also subject to the Working With Children Check. We are currently working with the NSW Office of Children’s Guardian in the rollout of the new Working With Children Check requirements to all existing Leaders and Rovers and other designated Adults in Scouting.

All new applications for Leader or Rover require a WWCC, that is verified by Scouts NSW before the application progresses. Everyone who is issued a clearance under the WWCC Check will still be continuously monitored for serious sex or violence offences.

Find out more: <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/working-with-children-check/about-the-check>.

In addition, Scouts NSW conducts random and ongoing Police Record Checks on all Leaders. An adult is not permitted to begin training until the Check has been verified.

Finally, Scouts trains all Leaders in issues relating to dealing with children. The ChildSafe module is a compulsory core part of Leader and Rover training.

Scouts has strict procedures in place for responding to any allegations of concerns about child protection.

Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

I think a Youth Member is being abused - what do I do?

You might have a concern about a Youth Member being abused because a Youth Member or someone else tells you about it, or because a Youth Member’s behaviour/injuries give you concern.

Tell someone!

Denying your uncomfortable feelings may result in inappropriate behaviour getting overlooked (e.g. "I thought something funny was going on but didn't feel right about saying anything", "That behaviour seems inappropriate but he/she's a really good Leader- he/she couldn't do anything like that!", "I didn't want to get the Association into trouble").

You should tell someone – See below.

Scouts Code of Conduct makes it compulsory for Leaders to report child protection concerns using the procedure outlined in this guide.

Who do I tell?

If you are concerned about child abuse, this procedure will help you take the right steps:

1. Keep the Youth Member safe.

Ensure the Youth Member and other Youth Members are presently safe.

2. Obtain the following information:

- The Youth Member's name, age and address
- Why you suspect abuse has occurred (Did someone tell you? Did you see inappropriate behaviour occur? Did you see bruises? Was the Youth Member acting differently?)
- The whereabouts of the alleged abuser
- What arrangements exist for the protection of the child.

3. Report it using the reporting procedure outlined on page 1 in this Fact Sheet.

Report, don't investigate!

Scouts Australia NSW works with the authorities (NSW Police, NSW Community Services, NSW Office of Children's Guardian) to ensure the protection of its Youth Members.

Leaders suspecting child abuse should not investigate the matter, but instead report it using the procedure outlined in this Fact Sheet.

Any questioning of Youth Members should be left to trained child protection professionals.

Tips For Keeping Youth Members Safe

Here are some Guidelines to ensure that Youth Members are safe under your care:

• **Always Have 'Two Deep Leadership'**

The term 'Two Deep Leadership' means that there should always be at least 2 leaders or a leader and another adult present when supervising Youth Members. At least one of the supervising adults must be 21 or older.

• **No One-on-One Contact with Youth Members**

If a Leader needs to talk to a Youth Member, it should be "in sight, out of hearing"; it should occur in the view of other adults and Youth Members.

• **Respect Youth Members' Privacy**

Leaders must respect Youth Members' privacy and their own privacy when it comes to changing clothes, showering, and toilet use. Leaders should intrude on these activities only to the extent that health and safety require them to. Photographing undressed children or undressing in front of children is not appropriate.

• **Separate Accommodation for Male and Female Youth Members**

Where a Scouting activity requires Youth Members to stay overnight, male and female Youth Members should have separate accommodation. Where this is not possible, there should be clear physical separation between male and female Youth Members (e.g. with a screen).

The Activity Leader must ensure that every Youth Member and their Parent or Carer is informed about and understands the lack of separate facilities before the activity starts.

- **Separate Bathroom Facilities for Male and Female Youth Members**

Male and female Youth Members should have separate bathroom (shower and toilet) facilities. If this is not possible, Leaders should schedule separate times for male and female Youth Members to use the bathroom. This schedule should be written on a notice that all Youth Members can see. The buddy system should be used for toilets, where one person waits outside the entrance. Occupied and Unoccupied signs and inside door latches are also recommended.

- **Separate Accommodation for Leaders and Youth Members**

Where a Scouting activity requires Youth Members to stay overnight, Youth Members should sleep in separate accommodation from adults, unless the adult is the Youth Member's parent or carer.

The exception to this is where accommodation is in Scout Halls and Leaders must be present for discipline and security reasons.

Where separate accommodation is not possible, there should be clear physical separation between adult and Youth Members (e.g. with a screen).

- **Open Door Policy**

All youth meetings MUST be open to parents, other Leaders and the Region Team.

- **Appropriate Clothing**

The way Members dress and present themselves must be appropriate. Members should not dress provocatively. Members need to be aware of any slogans on t-shirts and the messages they give. Proper attire is required for all activities, for example enclosed shoes, warm clothing, wet weather gear and appropriate swimming costumes.

- **Carefully watch your language and your humour. Use words to build up and encourage Youth Members. Remember your Scout Promise, the Scout Law and your obligations under the Code of Conduct**

Use of inappropriate language and/or humour may result in you being suspended while an investigation takes place, and if substantiated, you could be subject of disciplinary action up to cancellation of your membership of the Association.

- **Use discipline appropriately**

Remember that the primary disciplinary tool is to be the Youth Council.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if a Youth Member tells me about the abuse?

If a Youth Member tells you they have been abused, it can be hard to know what to do. If this happens to you:

- stay calm
- listen to them
- let them know you believe them
- reassure them
- tell them you're sorry it happened and let them know it's not their fault
- tell them you would like to get them some help
- don't promise to keep it a secret (you can't)
- tell them it's private but you have to tell some people who can help them
- don't say "Everything will be fine now". It may take a long time before everything is fine again
- use the reporting procedure outlined in this Fact Sheet.

Youth Members should feel confident to raise any problem or concern and know they will be listened to.

What does “child abuse” really mean?

“Child abuse” can refer to neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or psychological abuse.

- Neglect is when a parent constantly fails to provide a child with the basic things they need, like food, shelter and medical treatment.
- Physical abuse is when someone causes harm and non-accidental injuries to a child.
- Sexual abuse is when someone involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust.
- Psychological abuse is when someone damages the confidence and self-esteem of a child, consistently and over a period of time. It may include things like being really critical of the child, intimidating them, or putting them down.

What if the media contacts me?

The Chief Commissioner and the Chief Executive act as the Scouts spokespersons for the media, to ensure that any media reports reflect positively and accurately on the Scouts movement and Members.

Leaders who are approached by the media about Scouting should refer the media to the Communications and Development Manager at State Office on 9735 9000.

