

SCOUTS CANADA, Provincial Council for Ontario Voyageur Region

Child Abuse Reporting Policy and Guide

A member of Scouting who has reasonable grounds to suspect that any child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a Children's Aid Society. The Society will ask for the following information:

- Child's full name, date of birth, address and telephone number.
- Parent(s) or other care giver(s) full names, address and telephone number.
- Available information about when and where the abuse took place and the nature of the abuse. A description of any injuries and/or other signs of abuse or neglect.
- Any information about the person(s) responsible for the abuse.

If the suspected abuser is a member of Scouting or has other contact with children make sure that the Children's Aid Society is made aware and can ensure that adequate notifications are made to protect the child and/or other children from abuse. If a member of Scouting is a suspected abuser, put your suspicions and reasons in writing and mail or hand deliver to Warren McMeekin, 1345 Baseline Road, Suite 200, Ottawa, Ont. K2C 0A7. Mark the envelope CONFIDENTIAL.

Any report of child abuse is to be treated as strictly confidential and must not be communicated to anyone else unless the Children's Aid Society so directs. No member of Scouts Canada is to conduct any investigation of an abuse. Any information required in a report should be available from current registration records and/or the child's original disclosure of abuse. Neither the parents nor the child are to be questioned by a member of Scouts Canada.

Do not delay reporting suspected child abuse because you do not have all the above information. Give the Children's Aid Society the information you have and leave the handling of the case in the hands of the professionals. Because of requirements for confidentiality, a person making a child abuse report should not expect to receive any feedback from the Children's Aid Society.

As a courtesy, contact your Regional Field Executive, tell them who you are and that you've made a report to CAS so that if the CAS contacts them, they are aware. DO NOT disclose the name of the youth to your field executive. This must be kept confidential because of the age of the youth.

Children's Aid Society Abuse Reporting Number (24 hrs):
Quebec Abuse Prevention Number - DPJ(24 hrs):
Voyageur Region Contact

Ontario - 737-1918
Quebec - 1-800-567-8520
Bev McDiarmid 1-613-837-0592
bev.mcdiarmid@home.com

APPROPRIATE CARING & TOUCHING

It is important to show caring and to encourage youth by being warm and affectionate, especially when many who come to youth groups do so to get away from their own troubled homes. An extra effort by a youth deserves a friendly "pat on the back" or a "tousling of the hair". Being touched in positive and appropriate ways means "I like you" and "You belong here".

There are sensible ways for volunteers to continue to show warmth to youth while still protecting their own integrity.

1. Make a point of showing affection to all your youth in open places where others can see and share in the warmth. If you are comfortable with others watching what you are doing with youth, you are probably OK.
2. Touch youth in safe places on their bodies, avoiding private places. The back, the head and the shoulders are acceptable; the buttocks, the breasts, the thighs and the groin are not acceptable.
3. If a youth is hurt or feeling ill and needs to be examined, ensure that another person of the same sex as the child is present in the room while you are carrying out the examination. If possible, leave an examination of private places to health professionals. Don't force the youth to remove clothing for an examination.
4. If a youth is sad and needs to be comforted, show affection by placing your arm around a shoulder and giving a gentle hug or a good squeeze from the side.
5. If the youth needs to have a private conversation with you, remove yourselves the necessary distance from the others but stay in view of the group or leave a door slightly ajar.
6. It is impossible to avoid situations where you must be alone with a youth. But if you are to be alone, be sure that you have considered some safeguards and that parents are aware of the nature of your activity with the child. For example, when doing bed checks at camp, bring a second counselor if one is available. When traveling long hours by car, try to take a number of youth or bring along another volunteer.
7. Don't be alone and naked with a youth, anywhere. If you must change at public swimming pools, use the usual kind of discretion that is appropriate for such places.
8. Be cautious about any conversations with youth that involve sex. It is understood that youth ask honest questions about sexuality and teenagers might seek advice. Listening with respect for the child is appropriate; it is also appropriate to distribute and discuss agency approved information which is part of a general educational program about sexuality. Joking around with kids in ways that encourage promiscuity or the acceptance of sexually explicit material is dangerous for you and the youth.
9. In all things, respect the integrity of the youth. Allow the youth to back away from your well-intentioned affection if they wish. Ask the youth if they feel OK about being touched. Abused youth are sometimes fearful or distrustful of any physical contact. Most of us sense the difference between positive and caring intentions and those which are meant to exploit us. Use your common sense and good judgement to guide you in protecting the personal space of the youth in your care.