UPDATES

SCOUTING SAFELY

UPDATED Policies and Guidelines for District and Council Overnight events

***Updated March 1, 2025**

SCAN FOR RESOURCES

Excerpts from:
The Guide to Safe Scouting
The Outdoor Program Committee Guide
Scouting Policies & Guidelines

Heart of America Council

www.hoac-bsa.org

OUR COMMITMENT TO
SAFE SCOUTING

The **Heart of America Council** and **Scouting America** place great importance on creating the most secure environment possible for our youth members. To maintain such an environment, Scouting has developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies and provides parents and leaders with resources for its programs.

The council requires all participants in its programs to be aware of and adhere to all measures designed to protect our youth. These are Scouting's youth safety guidelines for conducting multiple-unit, district, and council overnight events. ***The Guide to Safe Scouting***, ***The Outdoor Program Committee Guide***, and other policies and guidelines apply to all camping and overnight activities involving Scout youth.

OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES POLICY

Adult supervision for overnight activities requires that **every adult** 18 years or older present on overnight activities to be a **registered member** of Scouting America.

There is a ***limited exception for parents and court-appointed legal guardians*** ('guardian" or "guardians") of Cub Scout youth attending overnight events with their own children or wards ("own child" or "own children") due to the family-centric nature of Cub Scouting.

Webelos Camping Guidelines
Webelos Scouts and Webelos Scout dens may not participate at a Scouts BSA troop unit campout or at a Scouts BSA "Camporee" or other events designed for Scouts BSA during the day and/or overnight, even as visitors.

Guidelines for Arrow of Light Scouts Camping Overnight with Scouts BSA
Arrow of Light Scouts can participate and camp at a unit coordinated campout with a Scouts BSA troop they are eligible to join. They must attend as an Arrow of Light den/patrol under the supervision of two deep leadership from their Arrow of Light den/patrol or pack. All Cub Scout camping requirements still apply, including the Arrow of Light den/patrol must have a BALOO trained adult leader in attendance and all of Scouting's Youth Protection policies apply.

Unit "Joint Activity"
If two units camp or participate in an activity jointly, the COR's of each unit must approve the activity. All Cub and Scouts BSA YPT guidelines apply.

PROTECTING **OUR YOUTH**

Unit Leaders are responsible for the care and safety of the Scouting youth during all Scout activities, including during attendance at summer camps, district, and council events.

Units and Unit Leaders who do not adhere to the adult registration, YPT and other guidelines and policies risk personal liability for any incidents or accidents that may occur as the Scouting America insurance and indemnification programs do not extend to non-registered or non-YPT compliant adults.

Please refer to ***The Guide to Safe Scouting*** for the most current information on safety in Scout programs.

If you have questions or concerns about Youth Protection, contact Alan Sanders, HOAC Director of Support Services at 816.569.4923 or Alan.Sanders@scouting.org.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs

REGISTRATION AND YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING

Cub Scouts

All adults EXCEPT parents or guardians **must be** registered with the BSA in fee-required positions to camp or participate in any overnight activities with Cub Scouts.

This includes Wolf, Bear and Webelos summer camp; Webelos Adventure Weekend; unit, district, or council-organized Family Camp; or district Camporees such as Arrow of Light Webelos participating in events hosted and run by Scouts BSA troops.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

These guidelines also apply to any council special events when Cub Scouts are camping or otherwise participating in activities overnight, even if the event includes other program levels of Scouting.

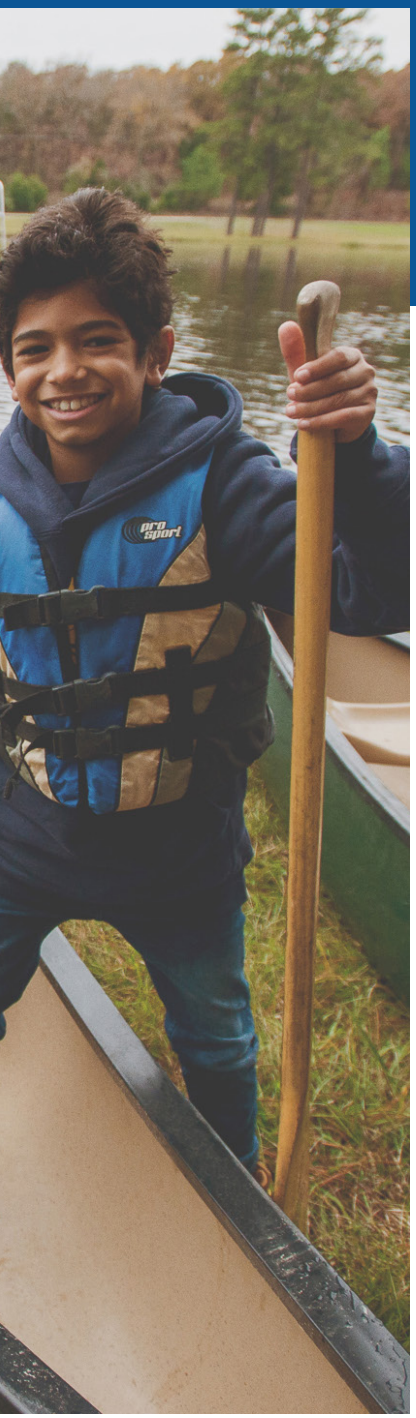
Note that the parent/guardian registration exemption does NOT extend to family members such as aunts/uncles, grandparents, or other persons even if they are living in the youth's household but are not a parent or guardian.

Lion Cub Partner or Tiger Cub Partner does NOT meet this registration requirement.

Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts & Venturing

All adults INCLUDING parents or court-appointed legal guardians ("guardian" or "guardians") **must be registered** with Scouting America in fee-required adult positions* to camp or participate in any overnight activities with Scouts BSA.

NOTE: A Merit Badge Counselor does not meet this registration requirement. Sea Scouts and Venturers adult program participants ages 18-20 must meet the same registration and YPT requirements as other adults.



YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING IS REQUIRED FOR ALL ADULTS

This is for adults 18+ including parents or guardians participating in camping or other overnight activities. Adults must complete online mandatory Youth Protection Training and retake the course at least every two years.

YPT is provided online only at My.Scouting.org. All adults in attendance at campouts must have a current certificate of YPT that is valid through every day of overnight camping or overnight activities with the Scouts, which includes summer camps; unit campouts or "lock-ins" and district/council camping or other overnight events such as Webelos Adventure Weekend.

- Individuals with expired YPT or who are not registered (noting the parental/guardian exception for Cub Scouts) may NOT participate in overnight Scouting activities.
- Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities including all meetings.
- There must be a registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth or female adult program participants.
- Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age and program-appropriate supervision must always be provided.
- The unit registration and YPT requirements do not include adults participating in open family events not involving overnight activities, such as a district Pinewood Derby; Scout Day at sports venues or fundraising events where the public are encouraged to attend; nor does it apply to adults only providing transportation to Scouts without any supervision of the youth by the driver at the unit activity upon arrival. All adults, including those not registered, are encouraged to take the online YPT courses.

SCOUTING AMERICA
TENTING POLICIES

Cub Scouts

In **Cub Scouting** programs **ONLY**, parents and guardians may share a tent with their family, including siblings that may be registered in other programs.

- Youth in Bear and younger age groups must sleep in a tent with their own parent or guardian. Webelos youth may tent with another youth of the same gender and within two years of age, or they may tent with their parent or guardian.

Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts, Venturing

For **Scouts BSA**, **Sea Scouts**, and **Venturing** youth participants shall tent with other youth participants of the same gender and within two years of age. Adults 18+ cannot tent with youth under the age of 18.

- Sea Scouts and Venturing programs: Adult participants ages 18-20 also cannot tent with youth under the age of 18.
- Youth who are registered with HOAC with a special need or disability who may require a parent or guardian to tent with them whether at a unit or district/council event or summer camp, must develop a plan in conjunction with the HOAC Scout Executive Brick Huffman or his designee (Alan Sanders, Director of Support Services) to address their specific needs.
- Where multiple program levels of Scouting are participating in an overnight activity, organizers should provide spaces designed to maintain discrete unit integrity by allocating adequate space for each participating pack, troop, ship or crew to camp as a separate unit. Within such spaces, units shall be responsible to maintain privacy with separate tents for families, for youth by gender and age, and for adults by gender.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

The Buddy System is to be used for **ALL** activities, including unit, district and council activities.

If a unit does not have two youth who meet the Buddy System gender and age requirements, the unit cannot conduct the activity unless it cooperates with another unit at the same program level to provide buddies that meet the necessary age and gender requirements.

CUB SCOUTS

For Cub Scouts in Bear and younger age groups, the parent or guardian shall be the youth's buddy.

WEBELOS, SCOUTS BSA SEA SCOUTS & VENTURING

For Webelos and Scouts BSA, the Buddy System requires that two (and not more than three) youth participants (all under the age of 18) of the same gender and within THREE years* of age are joined together for ALL activities where they are not part of a larger group of Scouts and under the direct supervision of at least two registered leaders.

Sea Scouts and Venturing may have mixed gender groups of three youth (all under the age of 18), but NOT two youth – mixed gender pairs for buddies are not permitted in any Scouting program. For Scouts BSA, the mixed gender option applies ONLY for a COED troop under a pilot program from the National Council and does NOT include linked or otherwise affiliated troops. Note that HOAC currently is not a part of this pilot program and does not have any coed troops, so opposite gender buddies do not apply to HOAC Scouts BSA units.

All buddies and tent partners must be approved by unit leadership. Activities involving youth of mixed genders always require at least one of the registered leaders to be a female over the age of 21. There is NO CHANGE to tent partner requirements. For tenting purposes in Webelos, Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts and Venturing, youth tent partners must be of the same gender, within TWO years* of age and under the age of 18.

**Note that the age difference is calculated by years, not years converted to months, so if one participant is 15 years old with a birthday next month, he or she is 15 for determining age difference.*

SCOUTING AMERICA
POLICES AND GUIDELINES

THE SCOUT OATH & LAW

On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

THE OUTDOOR CODE

As an American, I will do my best to:

Be clean in my outdoor manners.

Be careful with fire.

Be considerate in the outdoors.

Be conservation minded.

THE GUIDE TO SAFE SCOUTING

The Guide to Safe Scouting is an overview of Scouting policies and procedures gleaned from a variety of sources.

For some items, the policy statements are complete.

Unit leaders are expected to review the additional reference material cited prior to conducting such activities.

All youth and adult participants are expected to act in accordance with the **Scout Oath**, **Scout Law**, **Outdoor Code** and follow the current edition of ***The Guide to Safe Scouting***.

- Physical violence, sexual activity, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, unauthorized weapons, hazing, discrimination, harassment, initiation rites, bullying, cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in the Scouting program and may result in revocation of membership.
- Each activity area will follow Scouting America requirements for Youth Protection and the appropriate safety guidelines for the specific activity (such as water activities, climbing, shooting sports). The camp Staff and Commissioners shall be trained in these safety measures to the level required by Scouting. The Staff and Commissioners will uniformly enforce these safety and Youth Protection rules.

SCOUTING AMERICA
AGE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

When planning the activities for the youth, give particular attention to whether the events are **age-appropriate** and of the type permitted by Scouting America for that specific program level.

3 Important references for planning and conducting activities

1. Age-Appropriate Guidelines
2. Prohibited Activities
3. SAFE Checklist

- Note that within the Cub Scout program, age-appropriate and permitted activities are different for Lions, Tigers, Wolves, Bears and Webelos youth; and that Scouts BSA and Sea Scouts/Venturing youth also have program differences, even though the youth may be the same age.
- Event and Unit Leaders must take proper care to comply with these guidelines to protect the youth and to be covered by Scouting America insurance.

SAFETY MOMENTS

Unit Leaders are strongly encouraged to incorporate safety moments into all activities that are shared with the youth and/or adults, including at regular unit meetings, campouts and daily while attending summer camps. Safety Moments are opportunities to prepare for an activity, review safety measures and report incidents correctly.

Scouting America has prepared presentations on numerous topics in a new series that includes incident reporting helps, safe use of medication in Scouting, weather-related safety, winter activity, and winter sports. These can be found at ***Safety Moments.*** Some Safety Moments are for an Adult Audience Only, which will be indicated at the top of the Safety Moments page.

OTHER ACTIVITIES TO **PROTECT YOUTH & ADULTS**

National Youth Protection Standards must always be followed by every person at the event – Scouts, Unit Leaders, Parents/Guardians, Commissioners, Staff and Visitors – NO EXCEPTIONS.

- ## ABUSE & BULLYING
  Anyone caught or suspected of abusing a Scout will be required to immediately leave camp property pending outcome of the investigation by the local law enforcement. All forms of bullying, hazing and harassment including verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, and cyberbullying are prohibited as forms of Scout abuse and will be prosecuted.

- ## MANDATORY REPORTING
  Every Adult Leader, Parent/Guardian, Commissioner and Staff member is a mandatory reporter of violations of youth protection laws which requires you to report any actual or suspected incident of abuse.

  Youth protection incidents are not to be investigated by Units or HOAC Staff. The person discovering the suspected abuse should personally inform the Event Director or Scout Executive Brick Huffman immediately but should not discuss the incident with others nor attempt to investigate any alleged incident. It is extremely important that you not discuss any suspected or known abuse that you have reported with any camper, leader, or Staff member other than the Event Director or Scout Executive to whom you have reported.

  The reporter has legal protection from being revealed as the source of the report, but that protection is negated if he or she discusses the matter with other people.

- ## APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE
  Scout-appropriate language is the standard for all persons at a Scouting event. Sexual conversations of any nature including “jokes” are prohibited. Racial, ethnic, religious, sexist (including sexual orientation and gender identity) comments, jokes and slurs are prohibited. All youth and adults must follow Youth Protection Standards for language and behavior.

- ## IDENTIFICATION
  Identifying registered overnight campers is a safety measure to help prevent unauthorized access to the youth and the event. A distinctive identification method such as a wristband, event T-shirt or neckband shall be used to identify authorized participants.

- ## VISITOR POLICY
  Visitors, if permitted, must check in with event staff before entering camp and must always wear the designated identification while at the event.

- ## PRIVACY
  Adults must not enter tents nor shower with youth members and shall respect the privacy of all youth and other adults. Restrooms shall be designated for use by appropriate gender and age groups unless facilities are available for individual use only. The only exception to this rule is if the Scout is registered as Special Needs, the parent may apply to the HOAC Scout Executive or his designee for consideration of the Scout's circumstances.

- ## SOCIAL MEDIA
  Abiding by the "two deep" leadership policy that governs all Scouting activities also applies to use of social media, which means there should be no private messages and no one-on-one direct contact through email, Facebook messages, Twitter direct messaging, chats, instant messaging or other similar messaging features provided through social media sites.

  All communication between adults and youth should take place in a public forum (e.g., Facebook page). Email communication between adults and youth should always include one or more authorized adults openly "copied" (included) on the message or message thread.

  Social media and other electronic communications may not be used to harass, bully, or demean another person, nor to engage in any commentary that is racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, or sexist (to include sexual orientation or gender identity). These restrictions include communications between adults and youth as well as youth with other youth.

  All social media channels are, by nature, designed to be social, that is, shared with members of the public. As such, whatever social media activities you engage in should be completed with the understanding that the public will see them and may engage in an online dialogue with you as a result. You should not do anything on a social media channel that reflects poorly on you, other individuals in your council or unit, Scouting America, or anyone else. Before posting any content on any social media channel, you should first ask yourself if that content is in keeping with the precepts of the Scout Oath and Law.

- ## PDA
  Inappropriate public displays of affection and sexual activities are prohibited in the Scouting Program.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs