

BSA Response to Media (Portland, Oregon)

You may have heard about recent news coverage regarding a civil case in Portland, OR. Because this matter involves active litigation the BSA is not able to discuss specific points of this case, therefore the recent coverage you've read is based on the opening arguments from the plaintiff's attorney and does not include the BSA's side of the story.

The safety of our youth members and participants is our highest priority. Unfortunately, child abuse is a societal problem and there is no fail-safe method for screening out abusers. However, the BSA has always been on the forefront of Youth Protection and has the most respected Youth Protection measures of any youth-serving organization.

Scouting seeks to prevent child abuse through a comprehensive program of education, chartered organization leader selection procedures, criminal and other background checks, barriers to abuse, prompt reporting, and swift action. The BSA continues to seek ways to improve our Youth Protection programs, because one child being abused is one child too many.

Since Scouting's inception, having the highest quality of volunteers as role models and mentors for youth has been of utmost importance. The BSA keeps a record of individuals who are not eligible for BSA membership, as would any other responsible membership organization. These individuals have had their BSA memberships revoked for any number of reasons or have been evaluated on a prior occasion and have been determined to be ineligible for membership. While these files are confidential, they are not secret and are just one of the ways we help ensure a safe and healthy experience for our Scouts.

While we are deeply disturbed by the actions alleged in this lawsuit, they do not represent the values and ideals of the BSA or its councils, professionals, members, or chartered organizations.

For more information on BSA's Youth Protection guidelines and procedures, please [click here](#).

Youth Protection

The Boy Scouts of America places the greatest importance on creating the most secure environment possible for our youth members. To maintain such an environment, the BSA developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies and provides parents and leaders with resources for the [Cub Scout](#), [Boy Scout](#), and [Venturing](#) programs.

Leadership Selection

The Boy Scouts of America takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our youth members call for high-quality adult leaders. We work closely with our chartered organizations to help recruit the best possible leaders for their units.

The adult application requests background information that should be checked by the unit committee or the chartered organization before accepting an applicant for unit leadership. While no current screening techniques exist that can identify every potential child molester, we can reduce the risk of accepting a child molester by learning all we can about an applicant for a leadership position—his or her experience with children, why he or she wants to be a Scout leader, and what discipline techniques he or she would use.

Youth Protection training should be taken within the first 90 days of becoming an adult leader. While there is no standard time period after which an individual would be required to retake Youth Protection training (either online or the guided presentation discussion version), each person is encouraged to take either course as a refresher every 24 months. This does not preclude local councils or the National Council from requiring a date-specific certificate of completion for the online version.

Barriers to Abuse Within Scouting

The BSA has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies are primarily for the protection of our youth members; however, they also serve to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.

- **Two-deep leadership.** Two registered adult leaders or one registered leader and a parent of a participant, or other adult, 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.
- **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 conference, the meeting is to be conducted 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 and taking showers at camp, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- **Cameras, imaging, and digital devices.** While most campers and leaders use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade the privacy of individuals. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants.
- **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. When separate facilities are not available, separate 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.** The Boy Scouts of America does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program. 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 ensure that BSA policies are followed.
- **Member responsibilities.** All members of the Boy Scouts of America are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the Scout Oath and Law. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, and alcohol have no place in the Scouting program and may result in the revocation of a Scout's membership in the unit.
- **Unit responsibilities.** The head of the chartered organization or chartered organization representative and the local council must approve the registration of the unit's adult leader. Adult leaders of Scouting units are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth members and interceding when necessary. Parents of youth members who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance in dealing with it.

Digital Privacy

A key ingredient for a safe and healthy Scouting experience is the respect for privacy. Advances in technology are enabling new forms of social interaction that extend beyond the appropriate use of cameras or recording devices (see "Barriers to Abuse Within Scouting"). Sending sexually explicit photographs or videos electronically or "sexting" by cell phones is a form of texting being practiced primarily by young adults and children as young as middle-school age. Sexting is neither safe, nor private, nor an approved form of communication and can lead to severe legal consequences for the sender and the receiver. Although most campers and leaders use digital devices responsibly, educating them about the appropriate use of cell phones and cameras would be a good safety and privacy measure.

The "three R's" of Youth Protection

The "three R's" of Youth Protection convey a simple message to youth members:

- **Recognize** situations that place you at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone could be a molester.
- **Resist** unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.
- **Report** attempted or actual molestation to a parent or other trusted adult. This prevents further abuse and helps to protect other children. Let the Scout know he or she will not be blamed for what occurred.