



Outdoor Service Guides

Youth Protection

Introduction

Outdoor Service Guides (OSG) takes youth protection seriously, and all members must be aware of our relevant policies. Our shared responsibility begins with reading and understanding OSG policies dealing with youth protection and our ethical practices. It continues with learning about what child abuse is, how it happens, and our responsibility in identifying and reporting it. Finally, we put these practices into action. Together, these steps make up our Youth Protection Training program.

It is important to note that child abusers will always take advantage of ignorance. The better we know and understand how to identify the signs and different forms of child abuse, and the more comfortable we are with our role in both preventing and reporting abuse, the better we will be able to safeguard our youth. Discussion of these policies should be ongoing, upfront, and frequent with leaders, scouts, and parents/guardians.

Definitions

Buddy System: A group of two or three scouts who remain together during an activity.

Criminal History Check (CHC): A record search of criminal history by our partner, Sterling Volunteers. All adult volunteers and Rovers are required to undergo a check every two years.

Organization Member: A person who is currently registered in the OSG Dashboard, whether as part of a group or as a Lone Scout. All registered adults in OSG are organization members, regardless of whether they lead a youth section or not.

OSG Sanctioned Activity: Any event or activity sponsored or authorized by Outdoor Service Guides, whether that is the national organization, a regional council, one or more local groups, a section of a group, or the 1st Lone Scouts. If the attendees are meeting and carpooling to another site, the activity is considered to begin at the original meeting location and time.

Events put on by another organization but attended as a group activity are considered OSG Sanctioned Activities if advertised as such to OSG members.

Two-Person Leadership (TPL): Two unrelated, CHC'd adults present at all times during youth activities. Also referred to as "two-deep leadership".

Unrelated: Not in the same immediate family (spouses, parent/child, siblings), cohabitating (roommates), or in a romantic relationship.

Youth Protection: The responsibility of all organization members to provide a sanctuary of safety for our youth members through knowledge, conscious action, prevention, and reporting.

Training and Implementation

All OSG groups and organization members are required to follow the guidelines laid out in this policy. Adult members (18 and over) are required to review the policy at the time they join the organization and annually thereafter.

Statement of Youth Rights and Protections

Outdoor Service Guides is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and empowering environment for all young people in our programs. As part of our guiding principles, we recognize that children have inherent rights that must be protected through clear policies, responsible adult leadership, and a culture of trust and accountability.

Accordingly, every young person participating in OSG activities has the right:

- **To be safe** from physical, psychological, and sexual harm, in accordance with applicable laws, OSG's Youth Protection policies, and the standards we uphold in every unit and outing.
- **To bodily autonomy**, including the right to refuse physical contact or interactions that make them uncomfortable or violate their personal boundaries.

- **To report inappropriate or unsafe conduct**—including bullying, harassment, or abuse—without fear of dismissal, retaliation, or judgment.
- **To have their concerns treated with seriousness and care**, and for all reports of misconduct to be investigated promptly, impartially, and respectfully.
- **To receive accessible and age-appropriate information** on how to seek help and identify trusted adults within their OSG unit and the broader organization.
- **To decline participation** in activities, provided such refusal does not pose a safety risk or interfere with the group's essential functioning.
- **To reasonable privacy and confidentiality**, consistent with OSG's legal obligations to report certain conduct and its duty to protect all participants from harm.
- **To education and personal empowerment**, including guidance on setting boundaries, understanding consent, recognizing unsafe situations, and knowing how to seek support when needed.

These rights reflect OSG's foundational commitment to the dignity, growth, and well-being of every child. All OSG volunteers, leaders, and adult partners are expected to uphold these principles and actively ensure that our youth protection commitments are always met.

Disclosure of Abuse and Reporting

OSG believes adult organization members and leaders have a duty to protect and advocate for the youth in their care, regardless of whether the mandatory reporting laws in their area designate them as mandatory reporters. **Any suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the designated child welfare authorities and/or law enforcement officials in your area.**

After making the required external report, the reporting adult must promptly notify OSG through the following channels:

- The Group Scoutmaster or Lone Guide Commissioner, as applicable
- The Regional Commissioner
- The Chief Commissioner

A reporting adult should bypass any person in this reporting chain who is alleged to be involved, has a conflict of interest, or cannot be reached promptly. If any required contact is bypassed, the reporting adult must document the reason and promptly notify another appropriate OSG officer.

This internal notice requirement is intended to ensure that youth safety concerns are elevated beyond the local level, known to more than one responsible leader, and not delayed, suppressed, or handled by a single person.

In considering your role as a reporter, it is useful to understand the following:

- All reasonable suspicions of abuse must be reported.
- A good-faith report of suspected child abuse or neglect is not a finding that abuse occurred, a criminal charge, or a determination of guilt. You are reporting observations or concerns so the appropriate authorities can evaluate the situation.
- Good-faith reporters are generally protected from civil or criminal liability, even if the report is not substantiated. These protections do not apply to knowingly false, malicious, or bad-faith reports.

If a child has been injured or is in medical distress, your first call should be to 9-1-1. To report child abuse or neglect, you may contact the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD [1-800-422-4453]) or visit childwelfare.gov to search for the reporting number in your area.

Two-Person Leadership and Adult-Youth Interactions

Two-person leadership creates a system of checks and balances that helps illuminate and prevent opportunities for abuse by eliminating one-on-one contact between adult organization members and youth. Additionally, TPL guidelines are designed to protect from false reports of abuse.

One-on-one contact between organizational leaders and youth is prohibited within OSG, and the TPL practice must be followed without exception during all OSG sanctioned activities and events.

Key points regarding adult and youth contact during sanctioned activities:

- All adult organization members have passed a Criminal History Check per our Criminal History Check Policy¹.
- Each OSG activity must be led by a minimum of two unrelated registered and CHC'd adults, both of whom have completed OSG Youth Protection Training.
- During an OSG sanctioned activity, no adult may be alone with a child of whom they are not the parent or legal guardian. If a child has a condition that requires a caregiver or aide, an exception may be made by agreement of the parents/guardians and group leadership.
- Any interaction with a youth requiring a personal conference must be communicated to a second TPL adult prior to the interaction, and the conference must be held within view of that TPL adult.
- When driving a group of youth during an OSG sanctioned activity, it is ideal to have two TPL adults in the same vehicle. However, when circumstances do not allow for this, a second TPL adult can follow closely behind the first TPL adult in a secondary vehicle. Caravanning vehicles must stay together at all times; if one pulls over, the other one must also do so.
- Following an OSG activity, TPL must be maintained until all youth have been released. Youth are only to be released to those on their authorized pick up list. Pathfinders and Timberwolves may transport themselves from scout activities with parent or guardian approval.

The Buddy System

The buddy system is an easy first-line defense against abuse and endangerment. When scouts "buddy up," the opportunity for an adult to be alone with a single child is more or less eliminated.

¹ [Criminal History Check Policy](#)

Buddies should be close in age and maturity level. Buddy groups can be two or three scouts, but three is best practice.

Electronic Communications with Youth

Groups and scouts use multiple forms of communication, including telephone, email, text, chat, video, apps, and social media. All electronic communications are subject to our Code of Conduct².

Scouts Aged 10 and Under (Otters & Timberwolves)

- No adult organization member shall communicate directly via email, text, or similar technology with any youth member under the age of 11. All communications will be directed to a parent or guardian on record.
- If a youth scout under age 11 sends a message to a scout leader or adult, that leader or adult will direct any reply to the scout's parent or guardian on record.
- Exceptions may be made in regards to private reports of suspected abuse.

Scouts Aged 11-17 (Pathfinders)

- Adult organization members may communicate directly via email, text, or similar technology with Pathfinder youth scout members aged 11 or older, but ALL messages MUST include at least two unrelated registered and CHC'd adults **AND/OR** be copied (cc'd, group text, etc.) to the youth scout's parent or guardian on record.
- If a youth scout aged 11 or older sends a message to a scout leader or adult, that leader or adult will reply to the scout, AND INCLUDE another unrelated registered and CHC'd adult **AND/OR** the scout's parent or guardian on record to the message, email, or conversation.
- Groups/communications on messaging applications such as Discord, Slack, BAND, etc. must include at least two unrelated registered and CHC'd adults. Private messages on

² [Code of Conduct](#)

these platforms may never be used by adults to communicate with youth.

Participation in these platforms must follow the application's Terms of Service, many of which specify a minimum age of 13. Scouts under age 13 must only use platforms that allow children under 13 to have accounts.

- Exceptions may be made in regards to private reports of suspected abuse.

Tenting Arrangements

Please refer to the separate Tenting & Camping Policy³.

Bathrooms and Showering Facilities

Ideally, single user bathroom facilities should be provided at all scouting activities. If that is not possible, the entrance to the facilities should be publicly visible, not hidden away from view. In situations where no established facilities exist, the group should agree upon a system to ensure privacy and safety.

If shower facilities are provided/available, care should be taken to ensure that scouts have privacy for both changing and showering. Adults should respect the privacy of youth at all times, i.e., never entering areas where youth are changing or showering unless issues of health and safety are at stake.

Inappropriate Use of Electronic Devices

Organization members and leaders have an obligation to be aware of any electronic imaging and/or recording device(s) present during OSG sanctioned events. It is prohibited for anyone to use such devices to record sound or images during any activity in areas where there is an expectation of privacy, such as restrooms, showers, inside tents, and other areas where normal privacy would be observed. Such behavior constitutes a violation of privacy and could be subject to legal action.

³ [Tenting & Camping Policy](#)

Bullying

Outdoor Service Guides is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for all. Bullying, discrimination, and harassment are prohibited per our Code of Conduct⁴.

⁴ [Code of Conduct](#)