Youth Protection for Youth
Some Thoughts on Presenting Youth Protection to the Scouting Unit

Although the primary responsibility for moral and training rightly belongs to the parents of a young man or woman, the BSA provides resources for introducing the general subject of "Youth Protection" to the Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Venturing/Sea Scouting, or Exploring Unit. The materials are age-appropriate and geared to the mental and psychological developmental stage of the youth in each of these programs. Where the adult-oriented Youth Protection training develops a framework for safe and respectful behaviors on the part of adults to prevent and avoid even the appearance of improper situations, the youth-oriented materials seek to establish an awareness in youth of their personal wholeness, privileges, and integrity and to train them to respond to threats in an appropriate manner.

Using these materials as part of a Unit-Based program for presenting Youth Protection to Youth will foster in the youth an awareness that they are individuals and not objects or commodities. It's a message that youth need to hear in a world where advertising and media present people as objects of exploitation and where adult and youth predators are often too happy to groom and exploit someone a weaker and more vulnerable person.

Although sexual exploitation is the aspect that most worries parents, leaders, and guardians; bullying, domination, and physical or mental abuse are all part of the spectrum of exploitation. As leaders in the Boy Scouts of America we should consider preparing the youth in our care to resist exploitation as of co-equal importance to instilling the principles of the Scout Oath and Law. To do this properly we must be willing to discuss clearly and firmly with the youth in our care the types of abuse and exploitation and the appropriate responses. We must be willing to allow our youth to bring their concerns to us and we must provide honest and clear guidance while maintaining the two-deep leadership that protects us and while supporting and respecting our youths' family relationships so far as possible.

This leads us to the first requirement for presenting Youth Protection Training to Youth: We must prepare for the training. This means that the adults who will present must be comfortable with the material and willing to present it and to facilitate the discussion that follows. Watch the video presentations and read the *Presenters' Guide.* Second, the youth and their parents must both be aware of the upcoming presentation and "on board" with it. Ideally, the training should happen in the context of a Unit Meeting and the parents/guardians should be invited by letter ahead of time. In doing this, please respect that these can be very personal matters and that some may choose not to participate. Attempt to discuss this, but respect the family decision.

At the actual presentation strive to make all present comfortable. Before everyone arrives, set up the video equipment and cue up the materials. The presenters should be comfortable and cheerful and must not permit natural embarrassment at the material presented to turn the event into

an occasion for inappropriate joking or horseplay that dilute the message.

The Boy Scouts of America provides three video presentations oriented to each of the three major age groups in Scouting.

It Happened to Me, for Cub Scouts, is an award-winning presentation that has been updated and structured to convey four distinct rules of personal safety: Check First, Go With a Friend or Parent, It's My Body, and Tell. Through four separate scenarios the presentation outlines and reinforces the four rules. *The Presenters' Guide* can be obtained at:

http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/46-182.pdf

A Time to Tell is designed for Boy Scouts. It introduces and reinforces the concepts of Recognizing situations which place a youth in danger; Resisting attempts to coerce or force the youth to act contrary to their own best instincts or to break down natural inhibitions; and Reporting these situations to a trusted "authority". The scenarios presented include those in which both adults and youth are the perpetrators. Internet safety and bullying are also addressed. *The Presenters' Guide* is available at:

http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/46-180.pdf

Personal Safety Awareness for Venturing addresses the unique challenges presented by a co-educational program for older youth. Because youth in this age group may have great knowledge with little grounding experience or emotional maturity, the scenarios are more detailed can be challenging to discuss. Suicide, Internet Safety, Sexual Harassment, and Acquaintance Rape are all covered and it is important that the facilitator(s) be comfortable discussing these topics. *The Presenters' Guide* may be found at:

http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/46-506.pdf

When facilitating the discussion that follows each of these videos it is important that the facilitator emphasize that the individual has the power to say "NO" and that attempts to "use" or "objectify" another person are always wrong. By permitting youth to discuss these matters in a safe, non-threatening context we empower them to take charge of themselves in a most positive way. We give them the tools that they need to stand as a person whose value is independent of what others "see" in them or "use" them for and we help them along the road to psychological and emotional independence.

As the discussion wraps up, the facilitator should remind the youth that they have support structures available through Parents, Adult Leaders/Teachers/Mentors, and Peers. Reaffirm to the youth your willingness to listen to their problems and concerns and your respect for them and for their privacy, but remind them that you will always act in their best interests and that you will not permit an unhealthy situation which comes to your attention to persist.

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