



## Frequently Asked Child Protection Questions

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### Q. 1 What is Child Abuse?

- A Sexual: behaviour that is:
- non-consensual (by law, in Western Australia a child under 16 years is considered unable to give consent); or is
  - directed against a child under the age of 18 years by someone in a position of authority.
- Physical: Non-accidental use of physical force.
- Emotional/Psychological: Inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child.
- Neglect: Failure to provide the conditions essential for a child's physical or emotional development
- Please refer to the 'CS-004 Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy and Prescribed Procedures With Western Australian Framework Footnotes' document for full details related to this question.*

### Q.2 How do I deal with a disclosure?

- A. One way in which a member, helper or staff member may become aware of abuse is through disclosure by the victim. When a child under 18 years of age begins to share with you an experience of abuse, please apply the following guidelines:
- If a Youth raises a concern, no matter how minor it might seem on the surface, prepare and incident report (I2 form, which can be found on My Scout: Resources|Documents|Forms) at once and lodge it without delay.**
  - Listen to the child carefully, but do not press the child for details. It is not your role to conduct an investigation. Asking leading questions may in fact prejudice any subsequent investigations.
  - Be clear that you believe the child. It is essential to understand that rarely do children fabricate allegations of abuse and therefore all disclosures of abuse should be taken seriously.
  - Reassure the child that what happened is not the child's fault. Children are never responsible for abuse of any form being inflicted on them by other people.
  - Reassure the child that it is right to tell someone and that you are pleased that the child has shared this with you. Perpetrators often threaten a victim in an attempt to ensure silence.
  - Acknowledge that it is hard to talk about these issues.
  - Do not make promises that you cannot keep (e.g. not reporting the matter). Reassure the child that certain adults who can give protection need to know so that the abuse can be stopped.
  - Never say, "I do not believe you." or "Are you sure?" Do not show emotions such as disgust, horror, disbelief or panic in front of the child. This will risk making the child feel ashamed and helpless, adding to the abuse inflicted by the abuser. If a child senses that you cannot cope with the information, the child will likely lose confidence in you and withdraw, thus enabling the abuser to continue the abuse.
  - Remember, the alleged abuser must not be approached.**
  - Make notes of the conversation immediately while the facts are still fresh in your mind for reporting purposes. The Incident Report I2 form should be used to make a report to the Incident Liaison Officer
  - Finally, where a child is accused of inflicting abuse on another child, it may well be the child is an abuse victim. This is a very sensitive issue and must be handled by a person with professional qualifications.

### Q.3 What do I do if I work in a Mandatory Reporting workplace?

- A. If an Adult is a doctor, nurse, midwife, teacher, police officer or boarding supervisor the law also requires them to follow mandatory reporting guidelines. Additional to following your workplace Mandatory guidelines, a **report** of abuse or suspected abuse is to be submitted to the Incident Liaison Officer (ILO) at [ilo@scoutswa.com.au](mailto:ilo@scoutswa.com.au) immediately. Submit the report on an I2 form (which can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**). The body of such a report can be typed in Word or similar then attached to an I2 if this is easier. Advance notice of the report should be advised by phoning the ILO on 0400 525 629, this number is monitored 24 hours 7 days a week.

**Q.4 What is Grooming?**

A. Typically, victims are 'groomed'. Grooming may also involve a victim's family or a family friend and, in the case of Scouting, other Adults involved in the delivery of Scouting. The **'CS-004 Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy and Prescribed Procedures With Western Australian Framework Footnotes'** provides a list of certain characteristics that often apply to a person engaged in or intending to engage in child abuse.

**Q.5 What do I do if I am approached by the Police of another Authority?**

A. A situation concerning an Adult could be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities without anyone in Scouts WA being aware. It is very important that the Association be alerted of matters concerning Adults because, depending on the situation, it may wish to apply one or more procedures set out in the Child Protection Procedure document. Notice of the approach by the Police of another Authority must be submitted to Branch by phoning the ILO on 0400 525 629, this number is monitored 24 hours 7 days a week. After hours *any time* for emergencies or an urgent matter.

**Q.6 Should I still submit an I2 Report form to the Incident Liaison Officer even if I do not have any evidence?**

A. Yes. Adults must report reasonable grounds for concern about the behaviour of another person to the Incident Liaison Officer at [ilo@scoutswa.com.au](mailto:ilo@scoutswa.com.au) immediately by using the Incident Report I2 form, which can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**. Advance notice of the report should be advised by telephoning the Incident Liaison Officer on 0400 525 629.

**Q.7 What should I do about sexual relations between consenting Youth members?**

- A.
- The Association does not condone sexual relations between consenting Youth when participating in Scouting events or activities. While in certain situations sexual relations involving young people are not unlawful, there is a duty of care to and a requirement of respect for others involved in Scouting and especially those under the age of consent.
  - Under Western Australian law, from 16 years of age it is not an offence for males and females to engage in sexual relations. The same age threshold applies in other Australian states and territories, except for South Australia and Tasmania where 17 is the minimum age. In situations involving a person of 18 years or older and another who is has reached the age of consent, sexual relations are not necessarily unlawful in Western Australia and all other Australian states and territories. However, in Western Australia, when one person has a duty of care (a position of authority) over another the minimum age is 18; the Northern Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria also set the threshold at 18.
  - As can be seen from the foregoing, consenting sexual relations are not always unlawful. Therefore, caution and careful judgement should be exercised when they come to the attention of an Adult.

*Please refer to the 'CS-004 Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy and Prescribed Procedures With Western Australian Framework Footnotes' document for additional details related to this question. It can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.*

**Q.8 What can I do as a registered Adult (Leader or otherwise) to protect myself?**

- A. **'CS-004 Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy and Prescribed Procedures With Western Australian Framework Footnotes'** document, which *can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms*** deals with this question and should be read in full. The following must be standard practice, to protect adults in Scouting:
- Two Adults Present: Scouts WA requires that when Adults are supervising and conducting Scouting activities involving Youth, at least two Adults are present, except in unexpected, unusual and unforeseen circumstances. While the minimum ratio of Adults to Youth will vary from activity to activity, a minimum of two Adults is always required. This requirement is to protect Youth and Adults and is referred to as **"Two-Deep"** leadership.
  - Overnight Activities: Where no Adults are present for overnight activities (for example, a Patrol camp or some Venturer Scout events), sleeping and ablution arrangements for Youth must be separated by gender, except where impractical. In other situations, wherever possible, Youth should be separated by gender when accommodated overnight. Where this is not possible, Adult supervision by at least two Adults must be provided on-site.
  - Mixed-gender Groups: that do not have both a male and female Leader/Adult Helper must have a male/female parent accompanying them throughout the duration of the activity. If unavoidable, two Adults of the same gender may supervise a camp, provided that the parents of the Youth participating have been advised and have given prior approval. Such an arrangement is not encouraged and Groups should ensure that it is a rare exception, rather than the norm.

**Q.9 What should I do if I am unavoidably alone with a Youth**

A. An Adult unavoidably alone with a Youth, should contact their Group Leader by phone immediately to report this situation, and must also complete an I2 form to be submitted the Incident Liaison Officer. The I2 form can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.

**Q.10 Am I permitted to ever hug a Youth Member**

A. Where there is a choice, be very cautious about physical contact with a Youth as it could be unwelcome and in some cases be regarded as assault. There is no ban on a parent hugging their own child, but Scouting aims to develop confidence, independence and resilience in youth, so parents are encouraged not be overly protective in normal situations,

**Q.11 What are the Key Messages/Requirements all Adults who take part in delivering Scouting in WA should always follow when dealing with Youth?**

- A.
- Must hold a current Working with Children's Check card.
  - Must understand that when they sign the Code of Conduct, they are committing to abiding by the ten items listed on the Code, and that a breach from the Code **will impact** on their Scouts Australia membership status. The Code of Conduct can be found on My Scout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.
  - The Code of Conduct Form is to be reviewed and resigned annually.
  - Must know where to access the Child Protection Policy and Procedure documents.
  - When required; should review/refer to the Child Protection Policy and Procedure documents.
  - Must submit an I2 form for any incidents that require First Aid treatment. The I2 form can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.
  - Must submit an I2 form for any type of abuse disclosed, witnessed or suspected. The I2 form can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.
  - Remember when Adults are supervising and conducting Scouting activities involving Youth, at least two Adults are present, except unforeseen circumstances. This requirement is to protect Youth and Adults and is referred to as "**Two-Deep**" leadership.
  - Understand that Scouts WA requires that all activities it conducts be carried out in a manner which ensures, to the extent reasonably practicable, the safety and protection of all of its youth and adult members, employees and other persons who participate in such activities. In fulfilment of this statement, Scouts WA must do everything it can reasonably do to prevent harm to any person participating in activities conducted by Scouts WA.
  - All activities are to be carried out in an environment free from unacceptable behaviour including harassment, abuse, discrimination and bullying. Any form of abuse of persons who participate in Scouting activities will not be tolerated. Scouts WA has zero tolerance for any such abuse including child abuse.
  - **Where there is a choice, be very cautious about physical contact with a Youth as it could be unwelcome and regarded as assault.**
  - If a Youth raises a concern, no matter how minor it might seem on the surface, prepare and incident report (I2 form) at once and lodge it without delay. The I2 form can be found on MyScout: **Resources|Documents|Forms**.
  - Enter the Incident Liaison Officer's contact details into your phones [ilo@scoutswa.com.au](mailto:ilo@scoutswa.com.au) and 0400 525 629. This number can be accessed during the day if you are seeking advice etc and after hours **any time** in the case of an emergency or urgent matter related to a more serious incident.