



FREQUENTLY ASKED CHILD SAFETY QUESTIONS

1. What is Child Abuse

Child abuse is an act or omission that endangers a Child's physical or emotional health, well-being or development and can occur as a single incident or multiple incidents over time.

Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy separates child abuse into six categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence.

Physical abuse

- occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a Child. The abuse can take the form of (but is not limited to) slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, shoving, pushing, holding, or grabbing. An injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures.

Emotional abuse

- occurs when a Child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. The abuse can involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from a person to the extent where the behaviour of the Child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious risk of impairment (this can include the effects of bullying).

Sexual abuse

- occurs when a Child is used by a person (being either an Adult, or another Child or adolescent) for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including grooming by perpetrators, inappropriate touching, penetrative abuse, and exposure to pornography, accessing pornography, the retention of pornography or involving a child in the making or sending of child pornography.
- By law, in Western Australia, a child under 16 is considered unable to give consent. Western Australian Legislation makes it an offence for a person in a supervisory role to have sexual interactions with a person under their care who is aged 16 or 17 years.

Grooming

- occurs when communication or conduct is linked to facilitating the involvement of a Child in sexual behaviour with an Adult. Indicators of 'grooming' include but are not limited to: developing special relationships with children or inappropriate interactions (via social media and electronic devices), favouring or giving gifts to a child, asking a child to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship.

Neglect

- occurs when there is a failure to provide the Child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical attention or care to the extent that the health, safety, or development of the Child is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

Exposure to Domestic Violence

- occurs when Children witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation, and victimisation of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within a domestic relationship.

Please refer to the Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy With Western Australian Footnotes <https://scoutswa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2020-Scouts-Australia-Child-Protection-Policy-WA-Footnotes.pdf>

2. How do I deal with a disclosure?

A disclosure of abuse by a child or young person is motivated by the need for safety, protection, support, or information. Your response can have a great impact on the young person’s ability to seek further help and recover from possible trauma. Responding appropriately also ensure that your actions do not jeopardise any legal action against an abuser.

The most important things you can do are:

- believe them.
- reassure them that telling someone was the right thing to do.
- do not ask leading questions.
- do not get them to repeat their story a number of times.
- let them know what you will do next.
- do not confront the person alleged to be the abuser.
- record the disclosure (including details of what prompted the disclosure if possible)
- follow Scouts WA procedures for reporting abuse.

Things TO SAY when a child discloses abuse	Things NOT TO SAY when a child discloses abuse
“I believe you.”	“I can’t believe it!”
“I am going to try to help you.”	“Why didn’t you tell someone before?”
“I am glad that you told me.”	“I am shocked!”
“You are not to blame.”	“Oh that explains a lot.”
	“No, not (insert name), he/she couldn’t have!”
	“I won’t tell anyone else.”
	“Why? How? When? Where? Who?”
	“I will make sure this won’t happen again.”

Looking after yourself

It is important to be aware that receiving a disclosure can be very stressful and you may need to seek support from the Employee and Volunteer Assistance Program, Clear Health Psychology or mental health organisations such as Beyond Blue

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

In Western Australia, it is mandatory for certain professionals to report a belief of child sexual abuse.

Mandatory reporters are boarding supervisors, doctors, ministers of religion, nurses and midwives, police officers, teachers (including TAFE lectures).

If an Adult Member profession has a legal requirement to report, then they should follow the guidelines from the Government of Western Australia.

The adult member must also inform Scouts WA via phone (08) 6240 7798 and lodge an incident report on Person Incident as well.

4. Should I submit an Incident Report even if I do not have any evidence?

Yes. Adults must report reasonable grounds for concern about the behaviour of another person to Scouts

WA as soon as practicable using the incident report link <https://forms.office.com/r/WehtG5yztm> following by a phone call to (08) 6240 7798 if the incident has a severity level of Moderate or above. Incident severity can be checked accessing the link Incident Severity Rating.

5. What should I do about sexual relations between consenting youth members?

Scouts WA does not condone sexual relations between consenting young people 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 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 people to engage in sexual relations. However, when one person has a duty of care (a position of authority) over another the minimum age of consent for all people is 18.

Please refer to the Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy With Western Australian Footnotes Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy With Western Australian Footnotes.

6. What can I do as an Adult Member to protect myself?

Scouts Australia Child Protection Policy With Western Australian Footnotes document explains this question and it should be read in full. The following must be standard practice, to protect adults in Scouting:

- **Two Adults Present:** The Association's standard when Adults are supervising and conducting Scouting activities involving Youth Members is that at least two Adults are present (except in unforeseen circumstances such as an emergency). While the minimum ratio of Adults to Youth Members will vary from activity to activity, a minimum of two Adults is always the preferred minimum required – this TWO DEEP procedural requirement is to be the first consideration when planning any event or Scout activity. The failure to achieve this standard should not preclude the Scout Activity from occurring but, every effort must be made to achieve the standard before commencement. If TWO DEEP cannot be achieved, the situation and details of all attendees is to be recorded by the Leader in Charge. It is important to note that in light of changing Australian legislation regarding the 'burden of proof' for formal proceedings involving Child Abuse, it is imperative that all Adults in Scouting are advised that this mandated TWO DEEP policy may be the primary, and could be the only, method of proving that an abuse could not have occurred. In this light, 'TWO DEEP' becomes a vital precaution to any misconceived conduct on behalf of Adults, and for the legal position of the wider Association in law.
- **Overnight Activities:** For every camp or overnight Scout activity, each person must sleep in a separate bed. Adults are not to sleep in a room or camp with a youth member alone.
- **Travel:** On certain occasions (for example transporting a Youth Member from venue to venue) it is likely that only one Adult will be supervising. In these circumstances, prior informed consent (this may be verbal) is to be obtained from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the Youth Member concerned. In this situation, care should be taken that the Adult is not alone with only one Youth Member (that is, the Youth Member is in the company of another Youth Member).
- Under no circumstance should any Adult accept a third party into travel arrangements without the prior informed written consent of parents (unless the third party is another Scout Member). A Youth Member must feel safe and comfortable with the arrangements. Adults are to avoid placing themselves in a situation where Youth

Members feel uncomfortable or compromised or where an Adult's actions could be misinterpreted.

- Other than for the Youth Member of a parent/guardian or in a clear emergency, Adults must not travel alone with one Youth Member in a motor vehicle, watercraft or an aircraft (other than a two-seater glider, or two seat powered aircraft, land yacht, or two seat watercraft such as canoes or equivalent) the use of which has the prior approval of the parent/guardian). In order to minimise the risk of misunderstanding an Adult's actions when there is an urgent and unavoidable requirement to travel alone with a Youth Member:
 - The Group Leader (or the Adult's direct supervisor) must be informed, and the Group Leader/supervisor must monitor for any pattern of occurrence.
 - The Child's parents/guardians must be informed, and consent obtained (to be recorded in the post incident report).

7. What should I do if I am unavoidably alone with a youth

An adult unavoidably alone with a youth, should contact their next in line Leader/Supervisor preferably by phone immediately to report this situation, and must complete an incident report Person Incident. If safe and reasonable for all people, you should remove yourself from the situation.

8. Key dot points for all adults (18 years old Venturer Scouts and Rover Scouts included) in Scouting

- Must hold a current Working With Children's Check Card.
- Must understand that when they become a Scouts member they must abide by the Code of Ethics and Conduct and Mutual Agreement and if a misconduct will impact their Scouts Australia membership status.
- Must know where to access the Child Protection Policy and Procedures documents.
- Must submit an incident report for all reportable incidents, including but not limited to: WHS, Child Safety, Misconduct, Complaints, Grievances, etc.
- At least two adults are present, except in unforeseen circumstances.
- 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.
- Make yourself aware of the age of consent laws
- Where there is a choice, be very cautious about physical contact with a young person as it could be unwelcome and regarded as assault.
- If a young person raises a concern, no matter how minor it might seem on the surface, complete an incident report.
- In case of an emergency or urgent matter please contact (08) 6420 7798. This number can also be called during the day if you are seeking advice regarding reporting procedures.