

## **LITHUANIAN SCOUTS ASSOCIATION**

### **Duty of Care Code of Conduct for Adults**

The mission of scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

The Code of Conduct is expected of all adults, recognizing that at all times they are expected to act responsibly and exercise a "Duty of Care" to the youth members.

#### **Adults in Scouting:**

- Respect the rights and dignity of themselves and others.
- Demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility, recognizing that at all times their words and actions are an example to others.
- Act at all times in accordance with scouting principles, thereby setting a suitable example for all.
- Do not promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with scouting principles.
- Act with consideration and good judgement in all inter-personal relationships, both inside and outside Scouting.
- Respect everyone's right to personal privacy at all times. Take special care when sleeping, changing clothes and/or bathing are associated with any Scouting activity.
- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with youth members whenever possible. Remember, "in earshot and in vision".
- Avoid potentially compromising situations by ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance while supervising and/or accompanying youth members.
- Realize that bullying, physical, verbal or cultural abuse, sexual harassment, neglect or any other type of abuse is unacceptable conduct.

### **Duty of Care Position Statement**

The primary responsibility of adults in the Scout Movement is the welfare and development of its youth members. Our programs and ethic requires us to provide an environment in which children and young people feel valued and secure; and can grow as individuals while developing a sense of self worth, personal integrity and increasing competence through the acquisition of skills and achievements. Any adult behaviour that is not supportive of this development process is inappropriate and requires appropriate intervention/action. We have a duty of care to keep youth members safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. In activities, this duty is exercised through sensible risk management. In our general program activities, this duty is exercised through a respectful, caring, empathic and friendly relationship with youth members.

## **1. Encouraging Positive Behaviour (Discipline)**

Occasionally, there may be a necessity for appropriate disciplinary action. Adults should encourage positive reinforcement to correct inappropriate behaviour.

The following examples are inappropriate discipline methods:

- Physical blows or force
- Confinement
- Emotional/humiliation/name-calling
- Any other form of abuse

### Alternatives to punishment

If we allow someone to experience the consequences of their actions, there is potential for an honest and real learning situation to occur. Discipline can be maintained through both natural and logical consequences. Natural consequences represent the pressure of reality without interference. Disrespecting others, for example, will ordinarily invite similar treatment. But it isn't always appropriate to let natural consequences take their course.

Logical consequences involve an intervention by someone else. For example, disrespecting someone may carry a consequence such as removal from a program activity. The disadvantage, of course, is that this can deteriorate into another form of punishment which is imposed externally. Logical consequences should be negotiated as much as possible beforehand by everyone involved. Thus, an agreement is reached as to the consequences of, for example, using foul language or "put-downs" (Code of Conduct). Because everyone is part of the agreement, everyone is also responsible for seeing that it works. By adults and youth taking responsibility together, logical consequences become an alternative to punishment.

## **2. Physical Contact**

When dealing with youth members, there is acceptable touching and unacceptable touching. A handshake is generally acceptable; a hug is some times acceptable; and an embrace is usually unacceptable. Touching which gives offense or causes any unease is not acceptable.

## **3. Relationships**

Scouting affirms a duty to its youth members for their welfare and development. Adults accept a responsibility to care for youth members and to deliver the program. Adults enjoy Scouting and benefit from the training and experience it brings. However, adults are deliverers of the program. It is the youth members who are entitled to the benefits and protection of a safe, quality Scouting program. The correct relationship between an adult and a youth member is that of the adult being an instructor, guide, dispassionate friend and protector. It is a position of integrity, trust and maturity.

## **4. Language**

Scouting ethic requires that we do not use vulgar language or inappropriate language when working with youth members. Language should be acceptable to the reasonable onlooker and appropriate to the development of good citizenship.

## **5. Discrimination**

Scouting is a worldwide, multi-cultural movement. We welcome people to membership regardless of gender, race, culture, religious belief, sexual orientation or economic circumstances. Youth members are strongly influenced by the behaviour of adults. We need to be sensitive to the traditions and beliefs of all people and to avoid words or actions which "put down" anybody.

## **6. Harassment**

Harassment breaks down the positive and protective environment which we seek to develop, and at its worst, harassment is emotionally harmful. It is contrary to our objective of individual growth and development. Some examples are ongoing teasing, disparagement, belittling or the exclusion of individuals. Sexual harassment is any verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature which is unwelcome and offensive.

## **7. Privacy**

The individual's right to privacy must be recognized and taken into consideration in such matters as sleeping places and sanitary facilities. Adults should, where possible, have sleeping accommodations separate from youth members unless discipline, safety or available facilities dictate otherwise. (If sleeping accommodations are shared with youth members for any of the above reasons, at least two adults must be present at all times).

## **8. Alcohol Policy**

The use of alcoholic beverages or any recreational drugs/substances at encampments or activities on owned and/or operated properties or at any activity involving the participation of youth members is strictly prohibited.

## **9. Smoking**

It is inappropriate for adults to smoke in front of youth members at any Scouting activity.

## **10. General Conduct**

### Adults SHOULD:

- Help to establish safe and open communication in each Section of the Group.
- Have an "open door" policy. Declare all meetings open to parents and/or leaders.
- Treat all children, and others, with respect and dignity befitting their age.
- Be conscious of the "personal space" of others.
- Encourage participation by all, while being sensitive to each youth member's individual capacity.
- Be role models. Be friendly, courteous and kind.

### Adults SHOULD NOT:

- Show favouritism for particular youth members.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.

- Invite youth members alone to the adult's home or to other private accommodation.
- Have private talks with individual youth members away from the presence of other Scouts or adults. (Private talks should be in sight of but out of hearing of observers.)
- Carry one youth member alone in a vehicle.
- Go on a hike or other activity with one youth member alone.
- Demonstrate first aid on a youth member.
- Assist youth members with personal hygiene or dressing except where health or disability requires it and then only in the presence of another adult.
- Let children involve the adult in excessive attention-seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes. Adults should be particularly careful with the very needy child and should re-direct the behaviour to "healthy" activities. Adults should provide caring attention before it is asked for.

Adults **SHOULD NOT** engage in or let others engage in any of the following:

- Abusive initiation ceremonies.
- Invading the privacy of anyone when they are showering or using the bathroom.
- Photographing anyone undressed.
- Rough, physical, hurtful or sexually provocative games.
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to anyone.
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching, hugging, cuddling and kissing.
- Scape-goating, ridiculing, rejecting or isolating anyone.

## **11. General Duty**

Every adult's responsibility goes beyond the confines of his or her specific appointment to their own youth members. Adults are expected to intervene when they identify breaches of any part of this Duty of Care document. There are three primary areas of responsibility: to the parents, to the youth members and to yourself.

### **(a) Responsibility to Parents**

At the simplest level, parents have the right to know everything in which their daughter or son is going to be involved. Of course, parents have the right to say "no" if they feel any activity is inappropriate. Parents are also your greatest allies, and you should keep them as well informed as possible. Parents will sometimes defer to you, but only if you have convinced them that you merit their confidence and if you have earned their trust and respect.

The best way to start achieving this trust is to talk with each parent. The initial visit with parents when a youth first joins your section is critical for future relationships. This visit takes time, effort and commitment, but it is well worth it. Discuss with the parents what Scouting is about, its Mission and Principles, program, meetings and special events. Allow them to question you. It is better to deal with issues and concerns that the parents may have in a relaxed setting, rather than later in a "crisis" situation.

Where unsupervised activities take place, these are done so with parent/guardian's written approval (Scouts or Venturers camping alone).

Take personal interest in their child and communicate regularly, simply and clearly with parents. Knowing parents personally is a great asset.

**(b) Responsibility to the Youth Members**

By knowing each individual youth member, you will be in a better position to anticipate how each youth member might react in various situations. In physical activities, the youth member might express fears and concerns which are easy to understand, but a youth member might also display bravado to cover real fears. Should a youth member not understand something during an intellectual activity he/she might ask questions, but he/she might equally engage in disruptive behaviour instead of verbalizing his/her question.

Child Abuse

As an adult caring for other people's children, you may become concerned about suspected child abuse. An abused or neglected child is a child who is harmed or threatened with physical or mental harm or from whom the necessities of life are withheld. There are several forms of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

If a child you know becomes a victim of abuse, your first reaction can be very important in helping him/her through the ordeal. The following guidelines may help you deal sensitively and competently with the situation in which a child discloses that she/he is being abused:

- Stay calm. Don't panic or overreact to the information the child tells you. Listen compassionately, and take seriously what the child is saying.
- Don't criticize the child or tell the child they misunderstood what happened.
- Do respect the child's privacy and take them to a place where you can talk without interruptions or distractions, staying in view of another adult or the group.
- Take the time to listen to what the child has to say. Tell them you appreciate being told about the incident and that you will help make sure that it won't happen again.
- Explain that you will need to tell the proper authorities what you've been told.
- No judgement statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
- The child should not be questioned unless what he or she is saying is unclear. Avoid leading questions. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as, "Can you explain to me what you meant by that?"
- You should show real concern, but NOT alarm or anger, when receiving information from a child about possible sexual abuse.
- If children you know have been sexually abused, do not blame yourself or the child. People who victimize children are not easy to identify. They come from all walks of life. Often they have a position of status – they go to church, hold regular jobs, and are active in the community. Child molesters are sometimes very skilled at controlling children through giving excessive attention, gifts and money. Child molesters use their skills on parents and other adults too, disguising their abusive behaviour behind friendship and care for the children.

- A detailed account of any discussion regarding alleged or suspected abuse should be written as soon as possible after it has taken place, concerning who, what, when, where, how, but not WHY.

**(c) Responsibility to Yourself**

It is important to know your own limits and abilities. If you are leading an activity with any potential risks, always make sure that you are working well within your own capabilities. If you are working on the edge of your own skills, you are endangering the youth members in your charge. Seek out and obtain skills and knowledge to enable you to perform your designated role.

**12. Guidelines**

- Do not rely on your good name to protect you.
- Do not, for one moment, believe "it can never happen to me."
- While respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, try never to be completely alone with a young person. When it is appropriate to work one on one, make sure that others are within earshot and within vision.
- Never touch a youth member in a way that could be misconstrued.
- Never make suggestive or inappropriate remarks.
- Co-ed leadership in co-ed Scouting situations is highly desirable.
- Never, ever take a chance!

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References:

[www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)

Boy Scouts of America: Youth Protection

<http://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx>

[www.scouts.ca](http://www.scouts.ca)

Scouts Canada: Code of Conduct

<http://www.scouts.ca/dnn/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jRorQ8MHcrc%3D&tabid=727>

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