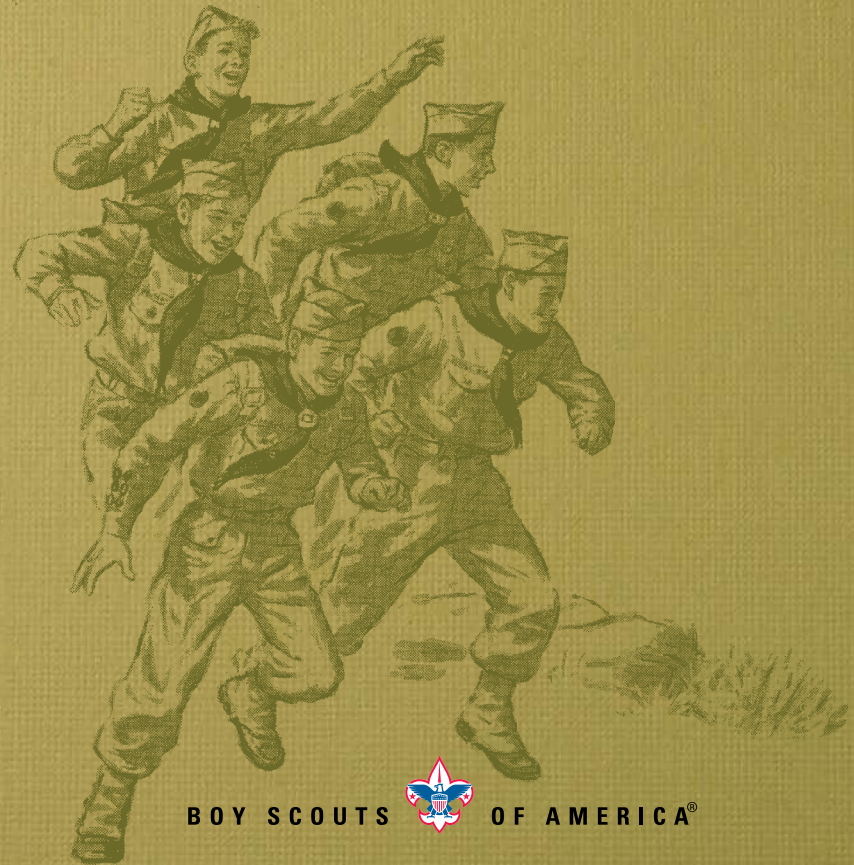


HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM CHILD ABUSE:

A Parent's Guide

**Cómo Proteger a Sus Hijos del Abuso Infantil:
Una Guía Para los Padres**

Disponible en español en su oficina local de Boy Scouts of America o ir a www.scouting.org/pubs/ypt/pdf/46-072.pdf.



BOY SCOUTS  OF AMERICA®



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, Texas 75015 -2079
www.scouting.org

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INTRODUCTION

Our children are often faced with choices that affect their development and safety. As parents, we can do our best to provide education and guidance to prepare our children to make the best decisions. One way we do this is to talk with our children. Some subjects are easy to discuss with our children—sports, their grades in school, their friends, and many other features of our daily lives. Other things are more difficult for us to discuss, including child abuse—especially child sexual abuse.

Although discussing child abuse with your children may be difficult for you, it is very important. Perhaps the most important step parents can take to protect their children from abuse is to have open communication in the home. Research has shown that children whose parents talk to them about preventing abuse are more effective at fending off assaults. Your role is very important.

More than 3 million reports of child abuse are received each year, including half a million reports of *child sexual abuse*. As a major youth-serving organization, the Boy Scouts of America has a unique opportunity to help protect the youth of our nation. This booklet is designed to give you essential information that should help you teach your children how to protect themselves.

If your son is a new Boy Scout, this might be the first time that you have seen this *Parent's Guide*. If you have other sons in Scouting, or if your son has advanced in Boy Scouting, we hope that you are familiar with this guide and have discussed its contents with your children. In either case, we encourage you to make this information part of a continuing family effort that reinforces the concepts included in this guidebook.

We do not expect that your son will become a victim of child abuse. It is extremely important, however, that if he is ever confronted with an abusive situation, he will know that there are adults in his life who will listen and respond in a supportive manner. The purpose of this booklet is to help you and your son establish, or reinforce, open communication on this sensitive topic.

SECTION I. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Youth Protection Joining Requirement:
For your son to join a Boy Scout troop,
he must complete the exercises included
in Section II of this pamphlet.

Using This Booklet

This booklet is divided into two sections. The first section is for your information. It contains information about child abuse and provides some tips to help parents talk with their Boy Scout-age sons about child abuse. The second section is for you to share with your son. Some of the activities listed in the second section are requirements your son needs your help to complete before he can join his Boy Scout troop.

It is important that you read the entire booklet before you and your son do any of the exercises together. You might be tempted to hand this booklet to your son and tell him to read it. We urge you to resist this temptation. Your son needs to know that he can openly discuss difficult topics with you.



CHILD ABUSE: BASIC INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

An abused or neglected child is a child who is harmed, or threatened with physical or mental harm, by the acts or lack of action of a person responsible for the child's care. There are several forms of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Child neglect is a form of abuse that occurs when a person responsible for the care of a child is able, but fails, to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care. Each state has its own definitions and laws concerning child abuse and child neglect.

Child abuse and neglect are serious problems for our society. The number of cases reported has increased each year since 1976, when statistics were first kept. Brief discussions of each form of abuse are presented below.



Neglect

A child is neglected if the persons this child depends on do not provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and supervision. When these basic needs are *deliberately withheld*, not because the parents or caregivers are poor, it is considered neglect. Often parents or caregivers of neglected children are so overwhelmed by their own needs that they cannot recognize the needs of their children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate injury of a child by a person responsible for the child's care. Physical abuse often stems from unreasonable punishment, or by punishment that is too harsh for the child. Sometimes it is the result of a caregiver's reaction to stress. Drinking and drug abuse by caretakers have become more common contributing factors in physical abuse cases.

Physical abuse injuries can include bruises, broken bones, burns, and abrasions. Children experience minor injuries as a normal part of childhood, usually in predictable places such as the shins, knees, and elbows. When the injuries are in soft-tissue areas on the abdomen or back, or don't seem to be typical childhood injuries, physical abuse becomes a possibility.

Physical abuse happens to children of all age groups; however, youth ages 12 to 17 have the highest rate of injury from physical abuse. This is possibly due to increasing conflict between parents and children as children become more independent.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is harder to recognize, but is just as harmful to the child as other forms of abuse. Emotional abuse damages the child's self-esteem and, in extreme cases, can lead to developmental problems and speech disorders. A child suffers from emotional abuse when constantly ridiculed, rejected, blamed, or compared unfavorably with brothers or sisters or other children.

Expecting too much from the child in academics, athletics, or other areas is a common cause of emotional abuse by parents or other adults. When a child can't meet these expectations, the child feels that he or she is never quite good enough.

