

Updates to Scouting America's Youth Protection and Adult Leadership Guidelines

Effective 9/1/2024

Accommodations

The older youth Scouting America programs (Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring) encourage leadership development, growth, and independence by recommending that youth share accommodations with other youth (must be the same gender per Barriers to Abuse). *However, we also recognize that exceptional circumstances may warrant a parent or legal guardian sharing accommodation with their same-gender child if the parent/legal guardian meets all leader registration requirements.*

Youth siblings of the same gender may share sleeping accommodations regardless of age with permission from their parents or legal guardians.

Campsites **must** be arranged to separate genders adequately. This separation could be achieved through natural barriers, physical distance, or by the campsite being divided, so long as the separation achieves privacy for both adults and youth, **as well as by gender**. Adult leaders are responsible for establishing the barriers and reminding Scouts that members of one gender must not enter the tent/housing of another.

The Buddy System

The buddy system is designed to provide an additional layer of safeguarding by ensuring no youth member/participant is alone and that a buddy can get help in an emergency.

The buddy system is used whenever **members**/participants are outside the line of sight of qualified adult leadership and specific activities where the buddy system is required for participation. Of note:

- The adult unit leadership oversees and approves buddies.
- Buddies are two and can also be three to prevent members or participants from being alone.
- *If the original pair for a buddy group is mixed gender, a third youth/participant must be added (for a buddy group of 3).*
- *Youth siblings of the same gender may serve as buddies regardless of age with permission from their parents or legal guardians.*
- *Except for siblings, the age gap between buddies must be at most three years for all non-sleeping activities and no more than two years for all sleeping accommodations.*
- *When exceptional circumstances warrant, a parent or legal guardian may serve as a buddy of their own child for both Scouting activities and sleeping arrangements, but youth buddies meeting the above criteria, if available, are always preferred.*

Participation by Parents and Legal Guardians

Parents and legal guardians are encouraged to participate in Scouting activities with their children. However, to meet youth protection policies, some participation—including all overnight activities—requires the parent or legal guardian to be a registered adult in their child's unit.

*See and note the Cub Scout Exception

Other Updates from the Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs

◆ Program Requirements

▲ **Q. Can buddy pairs be co-ed in any of Scouting's programs?**

A. No, buddy pairs of 2 cannot be mixed gender. However, a third youth/participant may be added to allow for a mixed gender buddy group of 3.

▲ **Q. Can a leader bring their Scouts BSA son or daughter to an opposite gender troop activity?**

A. Yes, as long as both troops' leadership and both chartering organizations approve. Only one set of two-deep leadership from the hosting troop, with a registered female leader over the age of 21 if girls are present, is required provided all other Barriers to Abuse are met, including the buddy or truddy system. Please see the Barriers to Abuse for buddy system updates.

▲ **Q. Our Scouts BSA boy troop and our Scouts BSA girl troop are linked and would like to host a joint outing or activity. Only one girl or only one boy can attend from their specific troop. Is this ok?**

A. Yes, as long as both troops' leadership and the chartering organization(s) approves. Only one set of two-deep leadership from the hosting troop, with a registered female leader over the age of 21 if girls are present, is required provided all other Barriers to Abuse are met, including the buddy or truddy system. Please see the Barriers to Abuse for buddy system updates .

❖ If you have any questions about these updates or any other Youth Protection / Barriers to Abuse guidelines, please contact Leah at leah.barry@scouting.org