

CHILD ABUSE

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Introduction

Scouts Victoria does not tolerate Child Abuse in any form. The following factsheet describes the different categories of abuse. These lists of examples are not conclusive, and all behaviour that causes a child to feel bad about themselves may be a form of abuse and should not be accepted in Scouting.

In line with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, this document is referring to all children and young people – that is, people up to 18 years of age.

Abuse against adult members is also not tolerated, and most of these forms of abuse also apply to adults; however, within Scouting, they are considered separate issues.

Physical Abuse

This is any intentional injury or threat to injure a child. Physical injuries do happen accidentally, and if they are truly accidental, they are not a form of abuse. The following are some examples of actions that could be physical abuse:

- Slapping
- Punching
- Shaking
- Kicking
- Grabbing
- Burning
- Shoving
- Pushing
- Holding

Injuries can include bruises, cuts, burns or fractures, but the abuse may also not leave any physical injury at all.

For example, a leader responding to a child running around the hall when they've been told to stop by grabbing the child hard around their arm and pulling them in front of them to talk to them could be considered physical abuse. This is not okay.

Emotional (or Psychological) Abuse

A child who is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats is being emotionally abused. This can include:

- Name calling
- Put downs
- Exclusion/ isolation
- Bullying
- Humiliation
- Threats
- Rejections/ ignoring the child

It's important to note that emotional abuse can take place in person, but also over social media or by letter, email, or over the phone.

Any of these behaviours that disrupt a child's emotional development can be classed as child abuse.

For example, a leader on parade who singles out a Scout going on a camp the following week to tell them to bring spare sleeping equipment for when they wet the bed is humiliating the child. This can have long term effects on the child in regards to both trust and future bed wetting, and could be considered emotional or psychological abuse. This is not okay.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a child can take many forms, but all forms involve an adult or other child using a child to meet their own sexual desires. Any sexual act by an adult with a child or children who is in their care is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can include:

- Fondling or stimulation
- Penetration (with objects or body parts)
- Having a child(ren) undertake sexual acts
- Watching a child(ren) perform sexual acts
- Touching a child in a sexual way, including touching them unnecessarily
- Exposing a child to pornography
- Accessing, producing or distributing child pornography



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For example, finding reasons to help a child undress for bed that is otherwise capable of undressing themselves could be considered sexual abuse. This is not okay.

More information can be found on the *Being Safe at Scouts and Venturers* page of our webpage about consent and the age of consent.

Grooming

This is behaviour that is intended to build a relationship with a child so that they will in future be open to sexual activities with or for the adult. These can include:

- Developing a special relationship with a child
- Favouritism towards a particular child
- Giving gifts to a particular child
- Creating or finding opportunities to be alone with a child
- Convincing a child to keep their relationship – or parts of it – secret
- Communicating with the child privately, especially to build a relationship with a child

Sexual offenders are experts at disguising grooming behaviour, which is why we have policies such as 'no one child with one adult' situations: protecting our children from abuse, and our adults from false accusations.

For example, a leader who continually finds reason to be alone with a child, gives them gifts, pays them particular attention, and communicates with them privately could be grooming a child. For this reason, no behaviour like this is okay in Scouting.

Neglect

Neglect is when a child isn't provided with basic needs relevant to the context, such as:

- Water
- Food
- Appropriate clothing
- Supervision
- Medical attention
- Other care
- Shelter

Not providing these things becomes a problem when the health, safety, or development of a child is put at risk.

So, failing to provide a plate of biscuits to children that have just eaten dinner on a Cub

night is not considered neglect. However, if a child is on a camp in winter without clothing that is warm enough for the conditions, leading to the child getting sick, that could be a case of neglect – on the part of the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) for not providing necessary clothing, and the child's Leaders for not solving the problem once the child was on camp. This is not okay.

Exposure to domestic violence

Children who are exposed to domestic violence, by seeing or experiencing the coercion, violence, intimidation, domination and victimisation of one or more people by another person within a domestic relationship, are also being exposed to a form of abuse. This kind of abuse is unlikely to take place within a Scout Group setting, but children within a Scout Group may be exposed to this at home.

Cultural safety and safety of children with disabilities

Special consideration must be put into the safety of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, and for children from Indigenous backgrounds or those with disabilities. These children are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and some special precautions may need to be taken. Please see our *Cultural Safety* and *Child Safety for Children with Special Needs* fact sheets for more information.

Further information

Please refer to our other factsheets, including *Signs of Abuse and Neglect* and *Child Abuse Reporting* for further information on how to identify child abuse, and what to do if you do identify it.

Conclusion

Any form of abuse is unacceptable by members of Scouts Victoria, or in our wider community. All adults in Scouting are expected to report any form of abuse they encounter, and for it to be dealt with appropriately and immediately.