

Let's discuss the BSA's rule on registering all adults who participate in overnight activities

By Aaron Derr November 8, 2023

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Earlier this fall, the BSA updated Scouting's Barriers to Abuse. The updated policy requires adults who spend the night at official BSA events to be registered.

Effective Sept. 1, 2023, all adults staying overnight in connection with a Scouting activity must be registered as an adult volunteer or an adult program participant.

Let's dive in with some of the most commonly asked questions we've heard since this rule went into effect.

Q: What does it mean to be registered as an adult leader in the Boy Scouts of America?

A: Being a registered adult leader indicates that you have been selected and approved to serve in your unit, or in a district or council position. This selection and approval process takes place at either the unit level through a charter organization, or through your council for council and district positions. Depending on your role(s) in Scouting, you may need to be registered in more than one position. You can register for multiple positions in the BSA at no additional cost.

Registration is more than just filling out an application. Unit level registration shows that your chartering organization has approved you to work with their youth in support of a specific unit. Registering also ensures that a criminal background check has been performed, and that a check against the volunteer screening database has taken place. The BSA's goal is to ensure that only the highest quality individuals provide supervision and leadership for our youth.

Q: What is the purpose of the new rule?

A: "That rule is necessary for a basic, common-sense reason," says BSA Youth Protection Executive Glen Pounder. "When you think about protection of our kids, not just from child abuse, but also from bullying, violence, any form of hazing ... we want to be sure that everybody who shows up doesn't have a criminal record. It's a real common-sense thing to put in place to make sure we are aiming to do absolutely everything we can do to keep our Scouts safe.

"I intend to work with the Youth Protection committee and others to simplify or clarify all of our policies as needed so that it's clear what the intention is and why the policy is in place."

Q: Does this rule apply to the parents of Cub Scouts, too?

A: Cub Scout parents or legal guardians taking part in an overnight Cub Scout program with their own child or legal ward are not required to register as leaders.

- This is called the Cub Scout overnight exception.
- The unregistered parent or legal guardian must be accompanied by a registered leader any time they are with youth members other than their own child or ward.
- Any other adult that wishes to camp at a BSA event — no matter the age of the youth at the event — must register as a member of the BSA.
- You can read the full details on how the Barriers to Abuse applies to Cub Scout parents on the Barriers to Abuse website. - <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss01/> **Note (JClery add):** “A Parents Guide” Cub Scouts Publ. 100-014 page 15

Q: What is the ideal position for adults to register for so they can camp with Scout units if they aren’t going to be unit leaders?

A: Adults may select a leader position that is available for their unit. Adults registering in a unit position must be accepted and approved by the head of the chartered organization or the chartered organization representative. Have a conversation with your unit leadership about what position makes sense for you to register for. There are many options, including committee members, assistant leaders or even Scouter Reserve.

For a complete list of unit positions, go to the Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs website and scroll down to the “What position should I register in to stay/participate in overnight programs?” question.

Q: What if I’m an adult attending a district or council activity, as opposed to an activity hosted by a unit?

A: If you stay overnight, you must be currently registered as an adult volunteer or an adult program participant. Adults need to register for the position(s) they are serving in. For example, if you are staffing a weekend district camporee overnight event, you could be registered as a member of your district committee(s) or council committee(s) depending on your role at the event. Adults who are attending the event with their unit need to be registered as an adult with that unit.

Q: What about merit badge counselors?

A: Registration as a merit badge counselor does not meet the overnight registration requirement. Check out our answer to this question on the Barriers to Abuse FAQ website.

Q: What about when Arrow of Light dens camp with Scouts BSA troops? Do the Arrow of Light parents have to register?

A: The Arrow of Light den must camp according to the specific camping guidance for Cub Scouts.¹

- That means that Cub Scout parents or legal guardians are not required to register as leaders if they are attending with their own child or legal ward.
- However, they must be accompanied by a registered leader any time they are with youth members of any age other than their own child or ward.
- As always, one-on-one contact between any adult and youth members other than their own child or ward is prohibited.

Reminder, if the troop and pack to which the AOL den belongs do not share the same charter partner, the troop and AOL den must receive permission from the council to hold the joint activity (see the camping section in the Guide to Safe Scouting for more camping details).

Q: What about campouts at facilities where Scouts share accommodations with the public? For example, our Scout troop is staying at a public campground. Do the new guidelines mean that trips to these types of locations are no longer allowed?

A: The requirement that all adults must register to stay overnight at a Scouting activity pertains to adults attending and participating with the Scout unit. It would not apply to the public. However, a unit needs to ensure they can meet all of Scouting's Barriers to Abuse at

¹ <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss03/>

The Boy Scouts of America has established the following guidelines for a safe and quality camping experience. Fundamental guiding principles for camping:

- Supervision of camping activities must include qualified, registered, adult leadership.
- At a minimum, one leader present is current in Hazardous Weather Training for all unit types. It is recommended that all leaders complete this training every two years.
- At a minimum, Cub Scout Packs, Webelos dens and Arrow of Light dens / patrols who camp overnight must have a BALOO trained leader present. BALOO is recommended for all Cub Scout leaders who go camping with Cub Scouts.
- Local council approval is needed for unit-coordinated overnight camping activities involving other units not chartered by the same organization. Units that wish to host events involving other units that do not share the same charter partner must have approval from their council. This includes events for packs, troops, crews, and ships from the same council; neighboring councils; the same territory; or other territory.
- Activities must be age- and skill-appropriate for all participants.
- Youth who are not registered in the unit may not accompany parents or siblings in camping programs of Scouts BSA*, Venturing, and Sea Scouting.
 - For example, siblings who are not registered in the specific troop may not attend Scouts BSA troop campouts as part of a "family camp". Youth who are not registered in the unit may not accompany parents or siblings in camping programs of Scouts BSA*, Venturing, and Sea Scouting.

each location they are utilizing. As always, Youth Protection and supervision remains the responsibility of the unit, and unit leadership must ensure that all BSA policies and guidelines are followed. We encourage you to speak with your local council to determine if a location you're considering for an overnight stay is appropriate and can meet all of Scouting's Barriers to Abuse.

Q: Our pack is participating in an overnight stay at our local museum. Do the adult museum staff have to be registered with the BSA?

A: Youth Protection and supervision remains the responsibility of the unit and Scout leaders. Vendors and other third parties must be licensed businesses that carry proper liability insurance, and units should be sure that they use reputable services. Vendors such as museums, climbing guides, hiking guides, rafting services all fall into these categories. Unit leadership must ensure that all BSA policies and guidelines are followed when using these services. As a reminder, all Cub Scout camping and Youth Protection policies apply, including ensuring that the location is approved by your local council, as required by the Guide to Safe Scouting.

Q: Our Venturing crew is going winter camping and have asked me to serve as an adult chaperone. I am registered in our chartered organization's troop, but not the crew. Do I also have to register in the crew?

A: Yes, adult volunteers must register for the position(s) in which they are serving. As a reminder, you can multiple register for additional positions in Scouting at no additional cost. Registering with the crew ensures that your chartered partner has agreed to you serving in this capacity.

Q: Our Scouts BSA boy troop and our Scouts BSA girl troop are linked. Which troop do I need to be registered with to go on a joint campout?

A: First, each troop is a separate unit and therefore each troop/unit must provide its own two-deep leadership, meeting the leadership requirements outlined in Scouting's Barriers to Abuse. Second, as with all adult volunteers, you must be registered for the position(s) in which you are serving. If you will be attending with the girl troop, you must be registered as an adult volunteer in the girl troop. If you will be attending with the boy troop, you must be registered as an adult volunteer in the boy troop. You can register for both troops (at no extra charge) and can select one troop for your primary registration and add the other troop as a multiple registration.

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/yp-faqs/>

Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs

Updated 8/20/2024 – ♦ indicates latest updates

Adult Supervision

Q: If my son or daughter is meeting with a registered merit badge counselor and is the only Scout present, is supervision by two registered adults still required?

A: No, provided you as the parent or legal guardian are present during the merit badge counseling session. If more than one Scout is present, all Barriers to Abuse supervision requirements must be met.

Q: If my son or daughter is the only Scout present for a unit fund-raising activity such as neighborhood or storefront sales is supervision by two registered adults still required?

A: No, provided you attend with your child during the entire fundraising activity. If more than one Scout is present, all Barriers to Abuse supervision requirements must be met.

Q. Do Lion and Tiger Den meetings require two-deep leadership since adult partners are present?

A. Yes. A Lion or Tiger adult partner is not considered a registered leader for meeting two-deep leadership requirements. Lion or Tiger partners, as well as other pack leaders, provide a pool of adults who could be registered as an assistant den leader to meet this requirement.

Q. If only one leader shows up, does that mean we have to cancel the meeting or activity?

A. Yes. This policy is in place to prevent abuse in and out of Scouting. Adults should never be alone with youth who are not their children.

Q: Does a Cub Scout parent or legal guardian have to be a registered leader to participate in a Cub Scout overnight program with their own child/ward?

A. No. However, they cannot serve as unit or den two deep leadership or supervision.

Q: What is an adult program participant?

A. An adult program participant is an individual aged 18 or older (most often aged 18-20) who is registered as a program participant in which youth members are also eligible to participate (for example Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring).

Adult program participants are subject to the same youth protection policies and guidelines as adult Scouters.

Q: I am an adult attending a pack, troop, crew, or ship overnight activity, do I have to be registered?

A. Yes, if you participate/stay overnight, you must be currently registered as an adult volunteer or as an adult program participant. Adult volunteers must register in the position(s) they are serving in and be approved by their charter partner where applicable.

For example, a parent attending a Scouts BSA campout could register as a committee member, unit Scouter reserve, Assistant Scoutmaster etc. depending on their unit role. Adults may select from the list in the FAQ below of adult leader position options provided in the “Registration Guidebook of the Boy Scouts of America” that is available for their unit type.

Also, see Cub Scout Exception for parents or legal guardians.

Q: I am an adult attending a district or council overnight activity, do I have to be registered?

A. Yes, if you participate/stay overnight, you must be currently registered as an adult volunteer or an adult program participant. Adult volunteers must register in the position(s) they are serving in.

For example, an adult volunteer attending an overnight Order of the Arrow event must be registered in a unit, district, or council position. Adults may select from the list in the FAQ below of adult leader position options provided in the “Registration Guidebook of the Boy Scouts of America” that is available for their unit, district or council position. Registration as a merit badge counselor does not meet this requirement.

Q: What position should I register in to stay/participate in overnight programs?

A. Adults may select from the list below of adult leader position options provided in the “Registration Guidebook of the Boy Scouts of America” that is available for their unit, district or council position. Adult volunteers must register in the position(s) they are serving in. Adults registering in a unit position must be accepted and approved by the head of the chartered organization or the chartered organization representative.

Unit Positions	Council and District Positions	Council and District Positions (cont'd)
Assistant Cubmaster	Assistant Council Commissioner	Council Treasurer
Assistant Scoutmaster	Asst Roundtable Commissioner	Council Vice-President
Assistant Webelos Leader	Asst. District Commissioner	Dist Exploring/LFL Committee
Assistant Den Leader	College Scouter Reserve	District Chairman
Chartered Organization Rep.	Council Advisory Council	District Chaplain
Committee Chairman	Council Assistant Treasurer	District Commissioner
Committee Member	Council Associate Member	District Exploring / LFL Comm Chr
Cubmaster	Council Camp Staff (Adult)	District Member-at-large
Den Leader	Council Camp Staff (Youth)	District Religious Emblems Coord
Explorer Post Advisor	Council Chaplain	District Service Team Chair
Lion Coordinator	Council Commissioner	District Service Team Member
Lion Den Leader	Council Committee Member	District Vice-Chairman
Mate	Council Executive Board Member	LFL Stem Day Camp Staff (Adult)
New Member Coordinator	Council Expl/LFL Committee Chr	LFL STEM Day Camp Staff (Youth)
Pack Trainer	Council Expl/LFL Committee Mbr	Neighborhood Chairman
Post Explorer Post Associate Advisor	Council Honorary Member	Neighborhood Committee
Post Committee Chairman	Council Member-at-Large	Roundtable Commissioner
Post Committee Member	Council President	Scouter Reserve
Principal / Executive Officer	Council Religious Emblems Coord	Unit Commissioner
Scoutmaster	Council Scout Alumnus	
Skipper	Council Service Team Chair	
Tiger Den Leader	Council Service Team Member	
Unit Chaplain		
Unit College Scouter Reserve		
Unit Scouter Reserve		
Venturing College Sctr Reserve		
Venturing Crew Advisor		
Venturing Crew Assoc. Advisor		
Webelos Leader		

Q: Why does registration as a merit badge counselor not meet the registration requirement to participate/stay overnight?

A. A merit badge counselor is an important position supporting Scouts BSA units; however, a merit badge counselor is not a unit position nor does their district/council role require overnight participation.

Merit badge counselors may select from the list of adult leader position options provided in the “Registration Guidebook of the Boy Scouts of America” that is available for another role

they serve in within their unit, district or council to stay/participate in overnight Scouting events and activities.

Q: Do the September 1, 2023, changes mean that third party vendors must be registered with the BSA?

A. No. Youth Protection and supervision remains the responsibility of the unit and Scout leaders. Vendors and other third parties must be licensed businesses that carry proper liability insurance, units should be sure that they use reputable services. Vendors such as museums, climbing guides, hiking guides, rafting services all fall into these categories. Unit leadership must ensure that all BSA policies and guidelines are followed when using these services, unit leaders must still have proper training.

Q: Do “Unit Functional Position codes” like Unit Advancement Chair or Unit High Adventure Chair found in the “Registration Guidebook of the Boy Scouts of America” fulfill this registration requirement?

A. No.

Q. Our Scouts BSA boy troop and our Scouts BSA girl troop are linked and would like to host a joint outing or activity. Do we have to provide adult leadership from each troop?

A. Yes, each troop is a separate unit, and therefore, each troop/unit must provide its own two-deep leadership, meeting the leadership requirements outlined in Scouting’s Barriers to Abuse.

Q. The Barriers to Abuse states “One-on-one contact between adult leaders and youth members is prohibited both inside and outside of Scouting.” What does ‘inside and outside of Scouting’ mean?

A. The BSA has adopted its youth protection policies for the safety and well-being of its members. These policies primarily protect youth members; however, they also serve to protect adult leaders. All parents and caregivers should understand that our leaders are to abide by these safeguards. Registered leaders must follow these guidelines with all Scouting youth outside of Scouting activities. There are careers that may require one-on-one contact with youth, however aside from those roles, volunteers must abide by the youth protection policies of the BSA even outside of Scouting activities.

This policy is in place to prevent abuse in and out of Scouting. Adults should never be alone with youth who are not their children.

Q. Does this mean my son cannot have a sleepover if I am the only adult present?

A. Yes, if any of the children other than your own child is a Scout, we strongly encourage all adults to use the Barriers to Abuse in and out of Scouting.

Q. Are there times when youth can gather, meet or conduct activities without adult supervision?

A. No. Two-deep adult supervision by registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required for all Scouting activities and must meet the leadership requirements outlined in Scouting's Barriers to Abuse. This includes patrol activities.

Accommodations**Q. Our council camp has Adirondack shelters that sleep 8 youth, should we treat them as tents or lodging?**

A. Lodging.

Q. Why do youth tent separately from parents outside of Cub Scouting?

A. Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts, and Venturing are youth led programs. The Cub Scout program is family-oriented.

Q. Can I share a tent with my son or daughter who has special needs?

A. Youth and adults tent separately in the Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts, and Venturing programs. Youth who have a special need or disability who may require a parent or legal guardian to tent with them must develop a plan in conjunction with their local council Scout Executive to address their specific needs.

Q. Can a Scout choose to tent alone?

A. Yes. There is no prohibition on tenting alone if unit leadership and logistics can accommodate that request. As always, all BSA youth protection policies must be followed.

Q. My family is attending a Cub Scout pack campout, may our family share a tent?

A. Yes, in Cub Scouting programs only, parents and guardians may share a tent with their family, including siblings that may be registered in other BSA programs.

Q. For Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouting, what does “Youth sharing tents must be no more than two years apart in age” mean?

A. Youth who share a tent cannot be more than two years apart in age. For example, a 13-year-old Scout could share a tent with anyone between the ages of 11-15 but not someone who was 10 or 16+.

Transportation

Q. How do the Barriers to Abuse apply to transportation?

A. An adult may not drive or be alone in the car with a Scout unless that Scout is their own child. An adult may drive two or more Scouts.

Q. Can 18-year-old Scouts transport other Scouts, if so, what are the qualifications for this?

A. Yes. Drivers must be currently licensed and at least 18 years of age. Scouting youth (under age 18) are not insured under the Boy Scouts of America commercial general liability policy. Transportation guidance can be found in the Guide to Safe Scouting.

◆ 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 buddy system. Please see the Barriers to Abuse for buddy system updates.

Q. Can any Scouts BSA member attend camp on their own?

A. Yes, as part of a provisional unit at camp. Contact your local council for availability.

Q. Can Scouts BSA girl and boy troops share a campsite?

A. Yes. 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.

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 buddy system.
- Please see the Barriers to Abuse for buddy system updates .

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss03/>

Webelos and Arrow of Light Camping Additional Guidelines

Effective June 1, 2024, Webelos is the designated program for 4th graders and Arrow of Light is the designated program for 5th graders. As such, the Arrow of Light program is no longer combined with the Webelos program and the purpose of Webelos (4th grade) is no longer to prepare Cub Scouts to join Scouts BSA. The purpose of the Arrow of Light program is to prepare for Arrow of Light Scouts to join a Scouts BSA troop.

Only Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light dens/patrols may conduct den coordinated overnight campouts. Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light dens/ patrols coordinated overnight campouts are restricted to no more than two consecutive nights.

Webelos den or Arrow of Light den/patrol coordinated camping is only for the youth members of those dens/patrols, their parents, and their registered adult leadership.

Webelos den and Arrow of Light den/ patrol coordinated campout must have a BALOO trained adult leader in attendance and all of Scouting's Youth Protection policies apply.

Reminder – Cub Scout overnight camping is limited to their council's designated locations with appropriate facilities.

During Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light den/patrol camping, each Scout should attend with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). A Webelos Scout or Arrow of Light Scout whose parent or legal guardian cannot attend a Webelos den or Arrow of Light patrol overnight camping trip may participate under the supervision of at least two registered leaders. The leaders and a parent or legal guardian must agree to the arrangement, and all Youth Protection policies apply.

Webelos Scouts and Webelos Scout dens may not participate at a Scouts BSA troop unit campout or at a Scouts BSA "camporee" or other events designed for Scouts BSA during the day and/or overnight, even as visitors.

Guidelines for Arrow of Light Scouts Camping Overnight with Scouts BSA

Arrow of Light Scouts can participate and camp at a unit coordinated campout with a Scouts BSA troop they are eligible to join.

- They must attend as an Arrow of Light den/patrol under the supervision of two deep leadership from their Arrow of Light den/patrol or pack.

- All Cub Scout camping requirements still apply, including the Arrow of Light den/patrol must have a BALOO trained adult leader in attendance and all of Scouting's Youth Protection policies apply.

Arrow of Light Scouts may participate at a Scouts BSA "camporee" (council coordinated, short-term camp, see NCAP SA-001) during the day and/or overnight in one of two ways:

1. With their Arrow of Light Den/Patrol. Arrow of Light Scouts can attend as an Arrow of Light den/patrol under the supervision of two deep leadership from their Arrow of Light den/patrol or pack. The Arrow of Light Scout's parent or legal guardian(s) may attend with the Arrow of Light den/patrol and their child, either alongside the two-deep leadership or as part of it if they are registered with the pack. Or
2. As an Individual Scout. Arrow of Light Scouts can attend with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) if the local council coordinates two deep leadership per NCAP Standard HS-502.

<https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/EagleProjectWorkbook2023a.pdf>

Risk Management and Eagle Scout Service Projects

See the "Guide to Advancement" topic 9.0.2.14

All Eagle Scout service projects constitute official Scouting activity and thus are subject to Boy Scouts of America policies and procedures.

Projects are considered part of a unit's program and are treated as such with regard to policies, procedures, and requirements regarding Youth Protection, two-deep leadership, etc.

The health and safety of those working on Eagle projects must be integrated into project execution. **Since an Eagle Scout service project is a unit activity, unit leadership has the same responsibility to assure safety in conducting a project as with any other unit activity.**

The unit leader or unit committee should reject proposals for inherently unsafe projects. The candidate should plan for safe execution, but it must be understood that minors cannot and must not be held responsible for safety concerns.

As with any Scouting activity, the Guide to Safe Scouting applies. BSA also expects leaders to use the four points of SAFE when delivering the program.

The SAFE Checklist can be found at:

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safe/>.

The most current version of the Guide to Safe Scouting can be found at:

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>