



Child Safety Youth Protection Policies

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in its publication ‘Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Organizations’ (Saul & Audage, 2007), has highlighted the importance of sexual abuse prevention for children and teens who participate in programming provided by youth-serving organizations. These organizations represent a broad array of programs and organizations which include youth sports (e.g., organized football and baseball leagues), mentoring programs (e.g., Big Brothers & Big Sisters), and activity and leadership-focused programs (e.g., Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts of America).”¹

Trail Life USA is dedicated to equipping Charter Organizations and volunteer adult leaders to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure in a healthy and safe environment through a program of education and the establishment of procedures and policies focused on the prevention of emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual abuse.

All members – both adults and youth – hold the KEYS (“Knowledge of Establishing Youth Safety”) to protecting and safeguarding our youth. These KEYS include the following:

- Volunteer Leader screening, including
 - Volunteer applications, including reference checks and recommendations by the Charter Organization;
 - Agreement with Trail Life USA’s Statement of Faith and Values;
 - Successfully passing a Criminal Background Check **before** approval of adult volunteer leaders;
 - Additional Criminal Background Check **every five years**;
 - Satisfactory passing of Child Safety Youth Protection Training **before** approval to serve as an adult volunteer leader.
- Know the Environment to Keep Youth Safe
 - Being aware of other events and individuals who might have access to the area;
 - Previewing facilities before events and evaluating the safety of the location;
 - Knowing who will be in attendance.
 - Education about protecting the health and safety of youth;
 - Child Safety Youth Protection Training must be regularly renewed – at a minimum of every two years (or sooner, as it is updated);
 - Being vigilant for signs of child neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and child sexual abuse – **including sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual conduct by other youth**;
 - Abusers cannot be easily identified and are typically trusted by children and their families. **NOBODY IS ABOVE THE RULES – ALL SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR OR VIOLATIONS OF POLICIES MUST BE REPORTED.**
- Mandatory Reporting and documentation of incidents and/or allegations

¹ Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/7538>

- Regardless of whether you observe it or hear it second hand, Trail Life USA requires you to report to law enforcement and/or child protective services,² Trail Life USA and the Charter Organization any good-faith suspicion or reasonable belief that any child is or has been physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected, has been (whether in person, online or through communication devices) exposed to sexual exploitation, child pornography, solicitation or enticement, or obscene material;
- It is also mandatory to report to Trail Life USA and the Charter Organization of any violations of Trail Life USA Child Safety and Youth Protection Policies;
- Report what you have seen or heard immediately and document.

Sometimes, even people whom we trust do things that are wrong, and can intend to misuse our trust and hurt us. Any act that threatens to harm another's physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual health is wrong. Unfortunately, there are some adults or even other youth who sexually abuse children. Any sexual contact with a youth – **regardless of who the other person is** – is wrong and should be reported. The following guidelines can help to reduce the possibility of that happening:

- All members are to adhere to the Trail Life Oath, Motto, and policies;
 - Immoral conduct, including physical violence, insults, drugs, alcohol, sexual conduct, inappropriate language, theft, and deceit, is inconsistent with Trail Life USA values and policies.
- Everyone should respect youths' privacy – especially when it comes to toilets, showering, and sleeping arrangements.
 - Separate accommodations, showers, dressing/changing areas, and restrooms for adults and youth are required;
 - It is never acceptable for an adult to be in the same bed;
 - No interaction between adults and youth in a bedroom or a bathroom except in limited situations required due to health and safety concerns, in which case the no one-on-one rule must still be followed;
 - While youth will be in close proximity with one another during these times, additional safety procedures apply even to youth-to-youth (such as Woodlands Trail, Navigators, and Adventurers tenting only with "buddies" in their program level);
 - **Any** sexual activity or overtures are strictly prohibited.
- A minimum of two (**registered**) adult leaders must be present for each activity
 - Although parents' participation is welcome, a parent who is not a registered member (thereby trained and screened) is not considered part of this two-deep leadership requirement.
 - Of the two required Registered and trained Trail Life USA Adult Leaders, those 18-20 years of age may count for one of the two-deep leadership positions required in the Youth/Leader Ratios and for satisfying the two-deep leadership requirement. The second leader must be age 21 or above, except for overnight activities, where the second leader must be age 25 or above.
- A youth should never be alone with only one adult (unless it is their parent);
 - This includes electronic communications such as texting and online communications.
 - This includes transportation to and from TLUSA activities;
 - Stay in areas designated for the activities and keep doors open.
- Adults and youth are not to have "secrets," nor are adults to provide "special treatment," gifts, or "forbidden items" (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, or allowing risky behavior) to youth;

² For the appropriate agency to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect, go to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id=5&rate_chno=W-00082 or call the National Child Abuse HOTLINE: 1-800-422-4453.

- There should be no secret activities, meetings, or clubs;
- Appropriate clothing should always be worn – especially for swimming activities;
- Hazing, bullying, physical hitting, and/or corporal punishment (even if intended as discipline) are strictly prohibited;
- Youth leadership should always be monitored by adult leaders;
- No inappropriate physical contact
 - No “rough-housing,” butt-slapping, massages, or inappropriate hugs;
 - No touching of children in the genital, breast, or buttocks areas;
 - Children may not sit on the lap of an adult other than their parent;
 - Children should never be touched against their will unless they are in clear danger.
- Cameras, cell phones, and other electronics should never be used inappropriately or in any way that can violate someone’s privacy or cause them any harm.

Youth members are instructed that if anyone fails to follow these guidelines, they should report them to their leaders and to their parents. It is the right thing to do and can help to protect them and others from harm. Likewise, adult leaders are to report any violations of the guidelines directly to Trail Life USA and to the Charter Organization of the individual violating the rules.

All adults are required to support and help youth members adhere to the teaching and instruction they are given in The Trailman’s Handbook for Navigators and Adventurers:

“Your mind, your body, and your soul are three things over which you have certain rights that other people cannot take away. A doctor may need to examine you in a very personal and private way, but if it makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parents or ask one of them to be with you during the examination. People may say things to you about ideas with which you don’t agree. If people go beyond what you think or have been taught is reasonable, or if they ask you to see, read, or do things that make you feel uncomfortable—whether it’s a physical act or a spiritual one—you have the right to refuse it, and that is precisely what you should do. If they offer you alcohol, illegal drugs, or ask you to help them steal something, or they touch you or ask you to touch them in inappropriate ways, go find someone you trust and tell them. Tell them more than once if you have to, or tell other trusted adults. If you can’t get through to them, find someone else until you are believed.

How do you know if something is wrong? One of the best things to do is to look for God’s direction. It is that gut feeling based on reason, love, and developing your conscience by studying moral issues and the Bible’s teaching on them. The more you develop your conscience, the easier it will be to know what the right thing to do is.

Adults should know better than to ask young people to perform sexual acts, disobey the law, or violate their religious principles. It is **never** your fault if someone asks you to do something wrong, even if they say it is. **“Say NO, then GO, and TELL.”**

Additional Health and Safety Policies:

- Buddy system
 - Should be a group of three;
 - Should be within the same program group (e.g., a group of Foxes, Hawks, Mountain Lions, Navigators, or Adventurers);
 - Should try to change “Buddies” frequently to help prevent cliques from developing.

- Camping & Activities
 - Each Troop will plan their own activities and adventures, whether during the summer or the program year. *Unit leadership at all levels will follow established child safety and youth protection procedures and will file with their Charter Organization a trip/tour/activity plan with the appropriate travel, activity, and contact information.*
 - A completed permission slip with a parent's signature should be completed for each event from the parent's dashboard;
 - All activities are to follow the policies and guidelines set forth in the Trail Life Health and Safety Guide;
 - All activities should be approved by the Troop Committee and Charter Organization, and additionally, all rules and requirements of the Charter Organization and/or any facility/camp being attended must be followed, even if they exceed or go beyond the Trail Life Health and Safety Guide or Trail Life USA policies
 - Boys should share tents with other boys of the same program group (e.g., Navigators' tent with Navigators, Adventurers' only tent with Adventurers, etc.), even if at a camp or facility that allows (for example) 10-year-olds and 16-year-olds to share tents. Trail Life USA standards encourage boys to only tent with or buddy with other boys;
 - Whenever possible, three or four boys should share a tent, rather than only two;
 - A first aid kit and at least one adult trained in CPR and First Aid should be present at all Troop activities;
 - A current health and medical form for all participants, including emergency contact information and those individuals to whom a youth may be released, should be in the possession of the adult in charge of the event;
 - Proper clothing and safety equipment for activities are required, including appropriate footwear when engaged in outdoor activities.
- In the event of an accident, injury, or violation of TLUSA policy, the following steps should be taken:
 - **K**eep yourself, the affected youth, and others calm;
 - **E**ncourage, affirm, reassure, and communicate with the youth;
 - **Y**outh health, safety, and protection are the main priority;
 - **S**ummarize in writing the details, facts, and action taken;
 - In addition to any required reports to law enforcement or other agencies, an incident report should be filed with Trail Life USA and the Charter Organization as soon as possible, certainly within 24 hours.
- Discipline should always be based on the betterment of the child, **never** the result of anger, and should never belittle, insult, or demean the child
 - Discipline should never be physical, e.g., spanking, slapping, pushing, or hitting, nor ever involve a deprivation of food, sleep, shelter, medical care, or other neglect.