

Code of Conduct/Duty of Care

Code of Conduct For Adults

The aim of SCOUTS New Zealand is to encourage the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of young people. This is achieved by the example and guidance of dedicated men and women who help the youth members in the fulfilment of the Scout Promise and Law, so they may become constructive and responsible citizens.

This Code of Conduct is expected of all adults i.e. Uniformed Leaders, Committee people, parents and helpers, who work within SCOUTS New Zealand, recognising that at all times they should act responsibly and exercise a "duty of care" to the youth members.

Adults in SCOUTS New Zealand must

- respect the dignity of themselves and others.
- demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility, recognising that at all times their words and actions are an example to other members of the Movement.
- act at all times in accordance with SCOUTS New Zealand principles, thereby setting a suitable example for all.
- do not use the Movement to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with SCOUTS New Zealand principles.
- act with consideration and good judgement in all interpersonal relationships, both inside and outside SCOUTS New Zealand.
- respect everyone's right to personal privacy at all times. They take special care where sleeping, changing of clothing, bathing and ablutions is associated with any Scouting activity.
- avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with youth members wherever possible. Remember, "in sight - out of hearing".
- for their own protection, should avoid potentially compromising situations by ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance whilst supervising and/or accompanying youth members. It is recognised that, in certain circumstances, it may be necessary for a Leader or adult, whilst acting responsibly and exercising their "duty of care", to be alone with a youth member.
- realise that bullying, physical, verbal or cultural abuse, sexual harassment, neglect or any other type of abuse, is unacceptable conduct by any member of SCOUTS New Zealand.

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The Duty of Care

The primary responsibility of adults in SCOUTS New Zealand is the welfare and progress of youth members. The single most important function of the warrant process is to ensure that, as far as possible, unsuitable adults are not given authority or control over children and young persons.

Our programme and our ethic requires us to provide an environment in which children and young people feel valued and secure and can grow as individuals, developing a sense of self worth, personal integrity and increasing competence through the acquisition of skills and achievements. Any adult behaviour which is not supportive of this developmental process is inappropriate.

We have a duty of care to keep youth members safe and protect them from physical and emotional harm. In adventurous activities this duty is exercised through appropriate risk management and in our programme activities, this duty is exercised through a respectful, caring, empathetic and friendly relationship with young people. In the selection and evaluation of Adult Leaders, their personal standards, character and ability to develop this relationship is much more important than any technical or practical skills or experience.

An Adult Leader's peers and the person s/he is responsible to, have a duty to ensure that this duty of care is fulfilled. In any situation of doubt, the youth member's safety and protection must be the deciding factor. No suspect situation can be allowed to continue in deference to the adult's "rights".

2. Punishment

Adult Leaders do not have any right or authority to punish youth members. We do not stand in locum parentis.

Any physical blow or force is assault and is a criminal offence, as is any physical restraint, confinement, or any sexual contact whatsoever, including interference with a youth member's clothing.

Discipline should be maintained through positive reinforcement (rewarding good behaviour). It should be the bad behaviour which is criticised, not the person. Appropriate sanctions can be by loss of privilege or exclusion for a short time from some enjoyable activity. Penalties should be avoided.

3. Touching

There can be good touching and bad touching just as there is good and bad language. A handshake is always acceptable, a hug often is, but a cuddle is usually unacceptable. Touching which gives offence or causes unease is not acceptable. A mature well balanced adult will have no difficulty in determining what is acceptable, young leaders may need some guidance.

4. Relationships

The Scout Association affirms a duty to its youth members for their welfare and development. Adult Leaders accept a responsibility to SCOUTS New Zealand to care for youth members and deliver the programme. Adult Leaders do enjoy Scouts and they do benefit from the training and experience it brings, but they stand on the other side of a dividing line, where on one side youth members are entitled to benefits and protection and on the other, adults who are part of the delivery process. The correct relationship between an Adult Leader and a youth member is that of instructor, guide, dispassionate friend and protector, very much like a teacher / pupil relationship. It is a position of integrity, trust and maturity. Circumstances do arise where there is little age difference between a young leader and a senior youth member and a quite natural amorous relationship between consenting

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young people of a similar age can develop. In such a circumstance the Adult Leader concerned should withdraw from the section because the proper adult to youth relationship cannot be maintained.

5. Language

The SCOUTS New Zealand ethic requires that we do not use bad language in our Association with youth members. There is nothing "adult" about frightening a youth member by swearing at him/her or trying to be "one of the boys" by using foul expletives with Venturers. Language should be acceptable to the reasonable onlooker and appropriate to the development of good citizenship.

6. Cultural

Scouting is a worldwide, multicultural movement. We welcome people to membership irrespective of sex, race, culture, creed or wealth. Youth members are strongly influenced by the behaviour of Adult Leaders. We need to be sensitive to the traditions and beliefs of various cultures and avoid words or actions which "put down" any culture or peoples.

7. Harassment

Harassment is ongoing niggling or disparagement or belittling individuals and includes a group of youth members excluding one from an activity or game. At its least extreme it breaks down the positive and protective environment we seek to develop and at its worst it is emotionally harmful. It is contrary to our objective of individual growth and development.

Sexual harassment is any verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature which is unwelcome and offensive to the receiver and which is either repeated or of such a significant nature that it has a detrimental effect on a person's well being.

General Conduct

Adult Leaders should not:-

- Sleep in the same tent or confined quarters as youth members.
- Show favouritism for particular youth members.
- Invite one youth member alone to their home or to caravan or camping accommodation.
- Have private talks with individual youth members away from the presence of other scouts or adults. (Private talks should be in sight of but out of hearing of observers.)
- Carry one youth member alone in a vehicle.
- Go on a hike or other activity with one youth member alone.
- Demonstrate first aid on a youth member.
- Assist youth members with personal hygiene or dressing except where health or disability requires it and then only in the presence of another adult.
- Take part inappropriately in body contact games

9. General Duty

Each Adult Leader's responsibility goes beyond the confines of his or her specific appointment or their own Scouts. Situations of inappropriate adult conduct or abuse can only be terminated by the

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intervention of another adult.

There are three areas of responsibility: **to the parents, to the young people** and **to yourself** as a Leader.

10. Responsibility to Parents

At the simplest level parents have a right to know everything that their daughter or son is going to be involved in, and of course, have the right to say no if they feel any activity is inappropriate. Parents are, however, your greatest ally and you should keep them as well informed as possible. If you are to earn their respect and trust, and they will sometimes defer to you against their better judgement, then you need to convince them of your confidence.

The best way to do this is to talk with each parent. The initial visit when the young person first joins your section is of absolute importance for future relationships. The visit takes time, effort and commitment, but is well worth it. Discuss with the parents what Scouts is about, its aim, religious policy, programme, weekly meetings and special events. Allow them to ask questions. It is better to deal with issues and concerns that they may have while you have the time than in a "crisis" situation.

Remember to explain your role as a Leader. You can tactfully introduce ways in which they might help. The fact that you are a volunteer, and that the subscription does not pay your salary, often changes parents' approach and commitment to SCOUTS New Zealand. It is also reassuring to parents to know that you have received, or are receiving, training as an Adult Leader.

Take a personal interest in their child; communicate regularly, simply and clearly with parents. Knowing them personally is a great asset.

11. Responsibility to Children

By knowing each individual young person you will know how she or he will react when the limit of her or his ability is being challenged. In physical activities you may get fears and concerns being expressed which are easy to understand, but you may also get displays of bravado covering up real fears. In intellectual activities you may get questions if a person does not understand, but you may also get disruptive behaviour as a way of saying the same thing.

As an adult leader caring for other people's children you may become concerned about suspected child abuse. You must take appropriate action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.

12. Responsibility to Yourself as a Leader

It is important as a Leader to know your own limits and abilities. If you are leading an activity with any potential risks always make sure that you are working well within your own capabilities. If you are working near the limit of your own skills, you are endangering the young people in your charge.

It is right and proper that a child should be able to challenge the behaviour of adults and, because none of us would like to see children hurt, injured or abused, people who are a danger should be discovered and removed from SCOUTS New Zealand.

Unfortunately, young people do sometimes accuse adults of mistreatment, often in the height of anger, or distress, or for their own motives, such as revenge, and only realise what they have done when it is too late. Once an accusation has been made, even if later disproved or withdrawn, the damage to yourself, your family, social standing and even your career may have already been done.

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13. Personal Safety

You need, therefore, to protect yourself against such situations and these simple guidelines may help:

- Do not rely on your own good name to protect you.
- Do not, for one moment, believe "it can never happen to me".
- Whilst respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, try never to be completely alone with a young person. When it is appropriate to work one to one make sure that others are within earshot and preferably within vision.
- Never touch a young person in a way that could be misconstrued.
- Never make suggestive or salacious remarks in the presence of young people.
- If you suspect a young person is developing a "crush" on you, discuss it with other Leaders and, if appropriate, the parents.
- If you notice any of your colleagues are at risk from their behaviour or a young person's crush, discuss it with them.
- Mixed leadership in mixed Scouting situations is highly desirable.
- The personal presence of an Adult Leader is a requirement for any activity which involves both boys and girls in the Kea, Cub or Scout sections.
- If you, yourself, are emotionally disturbed or distressed by a situation, or feel an abnormal affection for a young person, withdraw from the situation immediately and discuss the matter with a trusted friend.
- Never, ever take a chance.

Like accidents, it will be the everyday situation and not the extraordinary one when it is most important to take care. Whilst dropping people off after an activity, you will most probably end up with one child alone in the car. A simple precaution, which would give no offence, would be to seat that person in the back of the car.

Often, because it is instinctive, Leaders will react to a situation, for example comforting a child who is hurt. In that situation the leader is probably the last to realise the inherent danger. Have more than one Leader present when administering first aid.