

BSA Youth Protection Talking Points – As of May 15, 2019

- **Scouting is safe.**
 - **Experts recognize that the BSA's Youth Protection program has been at the forefront of working to protect youth** through a comprehensive approach that includes policies that serve as barriers to abuse, as well as training and policies that empower volunteers, staff and youth to recognize, respond and report suspected harm.
 - While any one incident of abuse is one too many, it's important to know that in 2018, when there were 2.2 million youth in our programs, there were five known victims of sexual abuse in our Scouting programs. We are continually improving all of our policies to prevent abuse.
 - After a full review of BSA policies and files, Dr. Janet Warren concluded that youth are safer in Scouting than elsewhere in society. In fact, Dr. Warren recently said, "The rate of incidence of reported abuse in BSA programs was far less than the rate of incidence in society as a whole. And the data shows that the BSA's youth protection efforts since the 1980's have been highly effective in preventing abuse."
- We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to abuse innocent children. **We care deeply about all victims of child abuse and sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting.** We believe victims, we support them, and we pay for unlimited counseling by a provider of their choice and we encourage them to come forward. All incidents of suspected abuse are reported to law enforcement.
 - The BSA designated all volunteers as mandatory reporters in 2011, requiring all suspected abuse to be reported to authorities.
 - In 2013, the BSA went back decades and retroactively reported any instances of abuse to law enforcement when the "Ineligible Volunteer" (IV) file was unclear whether it had been reported previously.
 - **We believe victims and routinely remove individuals based on only allegations of inappropriate behavior.** Once an individual has been removed from Scouting and has been reported to law enforcement, the BSA has no other avenue for further investigation or public disclosure.
- The BSA has maintained its **Volunteer Screening Database** – formerly known as the Ineligible Volunteer files – since the early 20th century as a mechanism to keep kids safe.
 - At a time before there were computers, the Internet, or electronic databases, the paper records kept by the BSA, while imperfect, provided an unprecedented barrier to abuse when little else existed in any other organization at the time, or even now. The intent of the Volunteer Screening Database was to remove individuals from the organization and prohibit them from re-joining.
 - After reviewing all of the files in the Volunteer Screening Database, Dr. Janet Warren found that "there is no evidence of a coverup by the Boy Scouts of America."
 - We recognize, however, that there were moments in our organization's history when certain cases were not handled the way they would be addressed today. Today, we have a very low threshold for removing any adult from Scouting who breaches – or is suspected of breaching – our policies because our priority is keeping kids safe.
 - And while there have been times when some perpetrators unfortunately have been able to circumvent our screening system or manipulate the appeals process, the fact is that there were countless times when the system worked and successfully prevented perpetrators from joining or re-joining the organization.
 - In the decades since, the BSA has worked deliberately to enhance its youth protection program to meet or exceed recommendations offered by independent youth protection experts.
- We fully support and advocate for **the creation of a national registry** overseen by a governmental entity, similar to the national sex offender registry, of those who are suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child, and thus allowing all youth-serving organizations to share and access such information.
 - Experts note that among the general US population, one in six men have experienced sexual abuse or assault at some point in their lives. This is an unacceptable public health problem that must be addressed, and we seek to be part of the solution along with all other youth-serving organizations.