



It starts with Scouts.

Tout commence  
avec les Scouts.

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## **Bullying/Harassment Policy**

### **STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Bullying/harassment are forms of abuse.

Bullying/harassment breaks down the positive and protective environment we seek to develop, and, at its worst, is physically, emotionally, or sexually harmful. It is contrary to our objective of individual growth and development.

Bullying/harassment in any form are unacceptable.

### **Definition of Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying has traditionally been defined by three elements: aggression (the intent to harm), a power differential, and repetition

The power that those who bully hold over others can arise from their individual characteristics, such as superior size, strength, or age; and from knowledge of others' vulnerabilities. The power in bullying can also arise from a position in a social group, either in terms of generally high social status, by membership in a group of peers who support bullying, or through systemic power (e.g., class, race, mainstream culture).

The perspective of bullying as a relationship problem highlights that problems arise from complex interpersonal dynamics rather than simply from an individual's problem with aggression or with being unable to defend him or herself. Within a bullying relationship, children and youth who bully are learning how to use power and aggression to control and distress another and children and youth who are repeatedly victimized become trapped in abusive relationships that are increasingly difficult to escape.

Bullying takes different forms at different ages and the label applied to bullying also changes with developmental stage and relationship context. The term harassment is more often applied to teenagers and adults for repeated aggression from a position of power. When children enter adolescence, new forms of aggression combined with power emerge. As children develop cognitive and social skills, they become more aware of others' vulnerabilities and differences and of their own power relative to others. Bullying becomes diversified into more sophisticated forms of verbal, social, electronic, sexually and racially-based aggression. In sexual harassment, the power derives from targeting another's sexuality, sexual orientation, or some other physical or psychological

vulnerability related to sexuality. Racism and sexism are also forms of aggression exerted from a position of power entrenched in socio-political foundations.

### **Challenges in Identifying Bullying**

Bullying can be considered on a continuum from mild forms of aggression to behaviors that deeply violate an individual's sense of well-being and belonging.

Repetition is an element of the definition that has recently been disputed by researchers. Children and youth consider an isolated act of bullying as such. With repeated bullying, however, the power differential between the individual who bullies and the victimized individual increases, leaving victimized individuals increasingly powerless to defend themselves. An understanding of the following will enable Scouters to identify bullying.

- The distress of the victimized individual may be the only indicator of a bullying situation. An outsider cannot always determine whether an act is aggressive; however, if a victimized child experiences it as distressing, then it needs to be addressed. To further complicate matters, the person who is victimized may mask his or her distress to save face; this is especially true in adolescence. Scouters must use judgment as to what kinds of behaviour are interpersonally hurtful and unacceptable.
- It may not be possible to know what the intentions are of a person who is bullying, but the Scouter should consider whether there is an intent to harm or cause distress, or a callous disregard for the distress of the victimized individual. Aggression in bullying needs to be differentiated from rough-and-tumble play and friendly, mutually fun teasing in which there is no intent to harm.
- Some children and youth are both aggressive and victimized by their peers. These children have been called "provocative victims" or "bully-victims". They experience a wide range of problems in their relationships and require intensive support to move beyond their involvement in bullying and victimization.

### **Means and Forms of Bullying**

Bullying can be carried out in several ways, some of which are face-to-face and others which are indirect. Children, youth and adults who bully/harass do so in a variety of ways. Bullying and harassment can take many forms, all of which reflect the power differential inherent in bullying.

All leaders handbooks contain details on the following types of bullying; Physical, Verbal, Social, Electronic or Cyberbullying, Racial bullying/harassment, Religious bullying/harassment, Sexual bullying/harassment and Disability bullying/harassment.

### **Statement of Contextual Parameters**

This bullying and harassment policy pertains and applies to **ALL** members of the Scouting community, and **ALL** the different forms of relationships within our community: including relationships between adult professionals, volunteers, parents; as

well as between children and youth of all ages. It is recognized that adults and older youth are role models, and that children and youth learn powerful lessons through observation of the behaviours of adults. Children and youth learn what is and what is not acceptable in relationships through observing the ways Scouters relate to each other, how Scouters relate to other children and youth in their section, and how Scouters relate to them.

Because cyberbullying affects relationships and the social climate within the Scouting community, cyberbullying is covered by the same policy as other forms of bullying and harassment.

## **PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES TO RESOLVE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT PROBLEMS**

### **Prevention**

1. All Scouters should be educated about bullying and bullying prevention. Basic information about bullying can be found in the **Leader Handbooks**. It is critical that all Scouters be aware that bullying behaviour is common among children and youth but hidden from adults.
2. Scouters must be vigilantly observant regarding the way youth in their *groups* relate to one another.
3. In establishing expectations about appropriate and respectful behaviour for each scouting group, Scouters must define bullying and harassment in developmentally appropriate terms and communicate that everyone has the right to be safe and has the responsibility to treat others with respect. The Scouter should send a clear expectation that bullying/harassment will not be accepted in any scouting activity or online.
4. Sometimes, children and youth need guidance in how to handle teasing and bullying and what the difference is. Leaders may need to lead a discussion on this topic. Do You Feel Targeted? (adolescences) and How to Handle a Bully (children) are two topics in a handout format can be found on the PREVnet website.
5. Parents should be aware of the Scouts Bullying and Harassment Policy.
6. Scouters must communicate to all members that they expect children and youth who are victimized to come forward and report the problem to them. As well, Scouters must communicate that peers who observe bullying and harassment should respectfully stand up against the bullying and/or report the problem to them.

### **Roles, Responsibilities, and Reporting**

The response must address the needs of;

1. the child/youth who has been victimized,
2. each child/youth who has seen bullying/harassing and
3. the Scouts in the affected peer group.

- a. Group Commissioner needs to be informed of the situation.
- b. Section leaders should meet with the children/ youth in the group: to get more information if needed, convey the seriousness of the bullying incident, and/or to create a restorative response to the bullying problem so it doesn't happen again. This is best done in a small group format i.e. lodges, sixes, patrols with one leader to each group. A Sixers Council and Court of Honour could be used to help solve the problem and give support to victim and help the bullying to change. Responses should use "relationship solutions", that is, they should be geared to enhancing children and youth's development of the ability to have healthy and respectful relationships.
- c. A meeting with the section leader, the child/youth who was victimized and his or her parents needs to be held to assess what happened and create a plan to ensure safety and the building of healthy relationships. Leaders need to regularly check in with the victimized child or youth for a long enough time period to ensure that the bullying/harassment has stopped and to ensure the physical and psychological safety of the child.
- d. A meeting with the section leader, the child/youth who was bullying and his or her parents to assess the seriousness of the incident, and to select and enforce appropriate formative consequences. Those who bully need to be aware that there will be regular check-ins to ensure the bullying has stopped. These consequences have two simultaneous goals 1) to hold the child responsible for their bullying and harassing behaviour and 2) to educate the child who has bullied so that over time he or she develops greater understanding, insight, and motivation to refrain from the behaviour.
- e. The intensity of the response for all three audiences should be balanced with the severity of the problem defined by
  - the severity of the aggressive behaviour,
  - how long the bullying/harassment has been going on,
  - how frequently it occurred,
  - how pervasive is the pattern of bullying involvement (in other words, does the child or youth have a history of repeated involvement in bullying or being victimized in other settings?)
- f. If all efforts made to prevent and constructively address bullying/harassment have failed, as a last resort, suspension or expulsion of the bully may be the only way to secure the welfare and safety of a person who is victimized and the positive functioning of the group.

- g. It is the Group Commissioners responsibility to make a decision if time limited suspensions or expulsions are warranted in consultation with the section leaders and parents of the child who bullied.
- h. A brief written report indicating dates and names of those involved in meetings should be presented to the Group Commissioner and a copy to the parents. These to be kept until the end of the scouting year.

This person who meets with the involved children/youth and their parents should be:

- Prepared for this role and sensitized to the issue of bullying and harassment
- Capable of assessing the degree of distress and potential risk for both the child or youth who was bullying and child or youth who was victimized.
- Knowledgeable about appropriate responses that take into account the child's or youth's unique characteristics, his or her family situation, the peer group dynamics, and available community supports beyond the Scouts setting.