

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. This pertains to a child under the age of 18, or the age specified by the child protection law of the state in question.

The Act defines sexual abuse as the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and it is against Girl Scouts Eastern Massachusetts policy for any volunteer, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any girl member. It is also against Girl Scouts Eastern Massachusetts policy to hire or engage any person with a history/record of such abuse or neglect.

When a girl member tells an employee or volunteer that she has been a victim of child abuse or neglect, as defined in the organization's policy, that employee or volunteer must immediately complete a Child Abuse Incident Report Form and send it within 24 hours to the Chief Membership Services Officer as outlined below.

The Chief Membership Services Officer, in turn, will make inquiries about the incident and document the resolution of how the incident was handled.

Signs of Suspected Child Abuse

Physical Abuse

Possible signs of physical abuse include:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Neglect

Possible signs of neglect include:

- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Sexual Abuse

Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Procedures for reporting abuse:

It is very important when speaking to a child that you do not ask her any leading questions. You should note only the information the child reports to you.

If the child is in **immediate harm**, call the **Girl Scouts Eastern Massachusetts** emergency number on the emergency contact card (1-800-348-7788).

If the child is **not in immediate harm**, document the information as thoroughly as possible on the Child Abuse Incident Report Form found on our website, www.girlscoutseasternmass.org in the Resource Library & Forms section and return it to Violet Apple.

If you suspect a child is a victim of child abuse, you should document the following information to the best of your ability:

What is the nature of the abuse?
How did you become aware of the abuse?
What action, if any, did you take?
What is the cause of the injury? (If known)
Who is the person(s) responsible for the injury? (If known)
Any other details that you feel may be helpful.

Contact:

Violet Apple vapple@girlscoutseasternmass.org
Chief Membership Services Officer
1-781-893-6113 ext 4302
Within 24 hours of the incident