

Protecting yourself from allegations of abuse

August 2013

It is essential that your relationship with the girls and women you spend time with is based on mutual trust and respect. Your behaviour must demonstrate good personal judgment through both your actions and your words. You have a responsibility to help each girl you interact with feel good about her relationship with you and to express your feelings about her in positive ways.

Touching:

- 'Good touching' is extremely important to our girls and should be encouraged. Being touched in positive and appropriate ways means "I like you" and "You belong here".
- Comfort a girl by extending your arm around her shoulder and giving a 'side-ways hug'.
- Touching should be done only on areas of the body that are considered 'safe' or 'neutral'. These include shoulders, back and head (i.e. tousling of hair). Do not touch anywhere that is 'private'.
- Always respect the personal space of the girl. Some girls are uncomfortable with any touch. Do not touch a girl that does not want to be touched; or do not touch anywhere that she does not want to be touched. Be alert to her verbal and non-verbal cues.

Showing acceptance:

- Show acceptance of all your girls through verbal encouragement and praise.
- Comment on their human qualities, rather than their clothing, appearance or possessions.
- Allow all your girls full opportunities to participate in all activities to the best of their abilities.

Being alone with a girl:

- Avoid any situation (including driving or travelling) where you are alone with one girl.
- When an ill or injured girl needs to be examined, maintain her privacy but examine her with another Guider present.
- Do not remove clothing from an injured girl unless essential for her well-being. This should be done by a health professional if at all possible.
- When a girl wishes to speak to you privately move away from others but stay within view of another adult.

Online communication:

- Avoid online (texting, email etc.) one-on-one communication with any girl.
- Parents/guardians should be copied in any communication with girls Guide age and younger; and with their knowledge for girls Pathfinder age and older. Avoid communication using instant messaging, Facebook or other online social networks
- Do not post online photos, tag girls in photos or share girls' names or locations.

Role modeling:

- Remember that you are a role model for the girls you work with and your behaviour is seen as the acceptable standard for adult behaviour.
- It is more important to be respected as an adult than to try to appear 'cool'.
- Do not appear inappropriately clothed around the girls. If you are changing at camp or at activities such as swimming, use proper discretion in your behaviour.
- In general, be cautious in any conversation with the girls around the topic of sex. Although these conversations may be appropriate in the right situation (e.g. program activities), avoid joking/teasing discussions about sexual behaviour. It is never appropriate to discuss your own sexual history or experiences.
- Language must be appropriate and 'clean'. Swearing or using sexual terms is not acceptable.

Always behave in a manner that someone watching from a distance would view as appropriate. Listen to your inner voice.

For more information, please see the Adult Member Support Procedures, Module 4: Girl Protection and Self-Harm, or contact your Provincial Girl protection adviser or email membership@girlguides.ca