

Scouting America Safeguarding Standard

Sex-Based Personal Space Protections with Privacy-Based Accommodations

1. Purpose

Scouting America's foremost obligation is the prevention of abuse and harm to youth. This standard formalizes and clarifies existing safeguarding practices related to environments involving privacy and vulnerability, including restrooms, showers, changing areas, and sleeping accommodations.

Sex-based boundaries in personal spaces are implemented solely for youth-protection and abuse-prevention purposes. These boundaries support consistent application, oversight, and auditability of safeguarding controls across the Scouting Movement, while ensuring that all youth are treated with dignity and respect.

This standard is designed to provide clarity for units, councils, families, and external safeguarding partners and does not alter youth eligibility for participation in Scouting programs.

2. Core Safeguarding Principles

- Prevention First
- Privacy as the Accommodation
- Dignity and Respect for All Youth
- Partnership with Parents and Guardians
- Consistency Across the Scouting Movement

3. Definitions

Biological Sex (Sex at Birth):

Male or female, referenced for the limited purpose of applying safeguarding and abuse-prevention standards related to intimate facilities and sleeping accommodations.

Privacy-Based Accommodation:

An accommodation that provides a youth with private access to facilities or sleeping arrangements without placing the youth in communal spaces designated for the opposite biological sex, including restrooms, showers, changing areas, tents, or sleeping accommodations organized on a sex-separated basis for safeguarding purposes.

4. Personal Facilities

Youth use communal restrooms, showers, and changing areas in accordance with sex-based separation requirements established in Scouting America's Barriers to Abuse.

When a youth has a legitimate need for additional privacy, as determined through consultation with the youth's parent or legal guardian and unit leadership, an appropriate privacy-based accommodation will be provided, consistent with this standard and the practical realities of the setting.

This guidance reflects Scouting America's national standards and is intended to be applied consistently across the organization. As with all national standards, implementation will occur in compliance with applicable law. To the extent a specific legal requirement necessitates any adjustment, Scouting America will address that circumstance while maintaining the underlying intent and safeguarding objectives of the national standard.

5. Sleeping Accommodations

Youth sleeping accommodations are arranged in accordance with Scouting America's Barriers to Abuse and the Guide to Safe Scouting, including sex-based separation and appropriate supervision.

When additional privacy is needed, privacy-based accommodations may be used to enable participation while maintaining safeguarding boundaries.

6. Registration and Administrative Alignment

Scouting America's membership application includes two sex designations: male and female. For purposes of safeguarding and youth protection, these designations refer to biological sex at birth.

For youth members, the sex designation is indicated by the parent or legal guardian, acting in good faith, as part of the registration process. Scouting America does not require, request, or verify birth certificates or other medical or legal documentation for this purpose.

7. Governance

Units and councils are not authorized to request, collect, or verify documentation related to a youth's sex designation beyond the parent or legal guardian's indication made during registration.

Decisions regarding whether a privacy-based accommodation is needed, and the form of such accommodation, are made at the unit or council level in consultation with the youth's parent or legal guardian and must align with national safeguarding standards.

Authoritative Sources and Resolution of Conflicting Guidance

Safeguarding requirements are established by published national policy, mandatory Safeguarding Youth Training, and the Guide to Safe Scouting.

From time to time, explanatory guidance, interpretive materials, FAQs, or other resources may be issued to assist units, councils, and families in understanding and implementing safeguarding expectations. If any such materials are inconsistent with published national policy, Safeguarding Youth Training, or the Guide to Safe Scouting, the published policy, training, and Guide to Safe Scouting control and must be followed.

Units and councils should rely only on these authoritative sources when making safeguarding decisions.