

Questions and Answers Regarding the Ineligible Volunteer Files  
Northern Star Council BSA

**1. *What are these files?***

A: These are records collected nationwide since the early days of Scouting (1920s) of individuals who have been dismissed from Scouting, and kept as a barrier to their re-entry. The files predate the modern database technology. The keeping of such information is a best practice as defined by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in their 2007 report on youth protection.

**2. *Why were they confidential?***

A: The files were confidential to encourage prompt reporting and protect the identity of any victims. To be proactive in protecting children, Scouting dismisses volunteers immediately at the allegation of misconduct, rather than waiting for proof of guilt. The files may contain names of individuals who were wrongly accused or cannot be prosecuted with available evidence. If crimes are prosecutable, the criminal records are public.

**3. *When were they released?***

A: Files from 1965 to 1985 were introduced into evidence in 2012 in a State of Oregon Court case. Subsequently, media successfully sued for their release, and they became public regardless of provable guilt.

**4. *Has law enforcement been involved in all of these cases?***

A: The BSA has always followed state laws in reporting abuse. In 2010, the BSA began requiring all abuse to be reported to authorities, superseding state reporting requirements and parental wishes. A professional third-party review of the 30 – 50-year-old files found that police were involved in at least two-thirds of the nationwide cases. The BSA has now reported 100% of all old cases to law enforcement.

**5. *What is different today?***

A: Society as a whole treat reports of abuse much differently than in the past when abuse often went unreported or was intentionally kept quiet. In Scouting today , all reports of abuse are immediately conveyed to law enforcement, even if victims or their families wished that such reports be kept confidential. Scouting's policies, procedures and programs have all been updated to reflect best practices in prevention and detection, including teaching young people themselves to recognize, resist and report abuse, and we will continue to do so.

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**6. What are some specifics of the youth protection policies and procedures?**

A: Here are some specifics. A complete list can be found through our policies and procedures web page at [www.NorthernStarBSA.org/YouthProtection](http://www.NorthernStarBSA.org/YouthProtection).

1. Prospective leaders go through a thorough screening process by parents and organizations which charter/sponsor the Scouting groups.
2. All volunteers also go through a criminal background check.
3. Youth protection training is required for all volunteers and must be renewed every 24 months. One of the first requirements for all new youth members is that they have a face-to-face discussion with their parents about abuse prevention.
4. Training is provided for youth members using video scenarios and discussions to teach them the three “R’s” of youth protection – to “Recognize, Resist, and Report” any kind of abuse.
5. Operational barriers to abuse are put in place including requirements that two adults are always present and that there are separate sleeping, changing and showering facilities. Scouting volunteers are also prohibited from individual contact with a Scout (who is not a family member) outside of official Scouting events.
6. Parents are provided with reporting procedures and contacts, as well as an anonymous tip line (1-888-213-0364).
7. All aspects of the Scouting Program are open to observation by parents and leaders.
8. Sexuality and sexual expression are not part of Scouting and inappropriate within Scouting. Inappropriate behavior may be the basis for youth or adult dismissal.

**7. How common is abuse in the Northern Star Council?**

A: It is extremely rare as we constantly work to ensure a safe environment for all Scouts. Over the past 10 years there has been one prosecuted abuser out of approximately 50,000 volunteers. That individual was immediately removed and later convicted. Between 1959 and 1985, 19 of the nearly 250,000 registered volunteers working in support of young people were dismissed from our council for reports or prosecution for abuse, even if not related to Scouting.

**8. What would you say about safety to a parent who is considering signing up their child for Scouting?**

A: We become partners with parents in the safety of their children. Scouting is a safe place for young people, with policies and procedures in place to prevent, detect and deter any kind of abuse. Leadership involvement, parent engagement, youth and adult training, and conversations between parents and their children on abuse prevention, all help to create a community that is safer for young people. This is an example of Scouting teaching young people the skills they need to be prepared for a range of challenges and opportunities that lie ahead throughout their lifetime.