

Safe from Harm Policy and Procedures

Approved by the WBSC regular meeting on 2026.07.12

1. Purpose and Mission Statement

The World Buddhist Scout Council (WBSC) is committed to maintaining a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment that ensures the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of all participants. This policy formalizes the WBSC's dedication to safeguarding children, youth, and adults, integrating Buddhist values of compassion and respect within the global Scouting movement.

As an organization holding Consultative Status with the World Scout Committee (WSC) for the 2024–2027 Triennium, the WBSC is mandated to align its internal governance with the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) "Safe from Harm" (SfH) framework. This document is specifically structured to address WOSM's Major Non-Conformities (MNCs) to ensure full compliance with international safeguarding standards and to provide visibility into the protective measures established within the WBSC structure.

2. Definitions of Harm

The WBSC adopts the WOSM definitions for four core categories of harm. Compliance requires all members to recognize and identify these forms of abuse:

* Emotional Harm: Persistent emotional ill-treatment, rejection, or psychological pressure that adversely affects the emotional development and mental well-being of an individual.

* Physical Harm: Any intentional act resulting in physical injury, trauma, or bodily impairment, including assault or the inappropriate use of force.

* Sexual Harm: Any involvement of a child or young person in sexual activities, encompassing both contact and non-contact acts, such as grooming, exposure to inappropriate content, or exploitation.

* Neglect: The persistent failure to provide for a member's fundamental physical or psychological needs, leading to serious impairment of health or developmental progress.

* Online Safety and Cyberbullying: The WBSC maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward digital abuse.

This encompasses proactive measures against online scams, identity theft, harassment, and cyberbullying. The Council fosters a digital culture where all electronic interactions are respectful, and members are empowered to identify and report harmful digital content or predatory online behaviors.

3. Membership Structure and Requirements

WBSC membership primarily consists of adult leaders and officers. To ensure the integrity of the organization's safeguarding environment, the following protocols are mandatory:

3.1 NSO Registration and Verification: All adult members must maintain an active registration with their respective National Scout Organization (NSO) and provide formal recommendations to be eligible for WBSC participation.

3.2 Background Check Compliance (MNC 12): As WBSC members typically originate from diverse jurisdictions, primary verification of background checks is conducted via the member's NSO, consistent with the recruitment process for WOSM volunteers.

3.3 Annual Compliance Audit: In accordance with MNC 12, the WBSC shall perform an annual audit of NSO registration statuses for all active officers and members. This ensures continuous adherence to national legal and safeguarding prerequisites. Individuals who fail to comply with their NSO's Safe from Harm requirements are strictly prohibited from participating in WBSC activities.

4. Age-Specific Safeguarding Guidelines

Safeguarding standards are categorized by developmental stage to ensure age-appropriate protection and educational integration.

Age Group Safeguarding Standard and Focus

Joey Scouts (5–8) Requirement for physical modesty protocols: Adherence to the standard that "bathing suit areas" remain covered. Reporting Expectation: Requirement for immediate disclosure to a verified Adult Leader upon any perceived boundary violation or discomfort.

Cub Scouts (8–11) Behavioral Environment: Maintenance of a positive and respectful behavioral environment. Privacy Protocols: Reinforcement of physical privacy standards and the identification of verified Adult Leaders for immediate intervention and assistance.

Scouts (11–14) Boundary Management: Maintenance of personal space and interpersonal boundaries in both physical and digital spheres. Relationship Parameters: Development of healthy relationship limits and the prioritization of digital privacy and information verification.

Senior Scouts (15–18) Verification of Consent: Systematic application of consent and boundary recognition. Intervention: Proficiency in identifying and reporting relational manipulation, control, or inappropriate conduct to established authorities.

Rover Scouts (18–26) Enthusiastic Consent: Prioritization of ongoing, enthusiastic consent in all personal relationships. Leadership: Role modeling safeguarding behaviors, countering digital grooming, and providing peer support for the reporting of harmful content.

Adult Leader Responsibilities

Adult leaders are professionally obligated to handle disclosures with empathy and clinical objectivity. Leaders must:

- Listen actively while maintaining a neutral, safe environment.
- Strictly avoid the use of leading questions or the solicitation of unnecessary forensic details.
- Immediately escalate concerns through the formal WBSC reporting workflow.

5. Training and Education Framework

Mandatory training is the cornerstone of the WBSC safeguarding strategy, ensuring all members are equipped to identify and mitigate risks.

Integration Training (MNC 10)

Before interacting with youth or participating in WBSC-sanctioned events, all adults must complete elemental Safe from Harm training covering:

- Recognizing and identifying abuse: Understanding the various indicators of harm.
- Responding and reporting: Formal procedures for addressing potentially harmful or abusive situations.
- Policy Literacy: Full comprehension of the WBSC Safe from Harm policy and Code of Conduct.
- Well-being Assurance: Strategies for ensuring the safety and overall well-being of children and youth in Scouting.

Annual Training Schedule

Training updates shall be integrated into the WBSC annual meeting cycle. The training should focus, including but not exclusively on, the following topics:

- Identification and recognition of abuse typologies.
- Gender Equality and inclusive safeguarding methodologies.
- Cyberbullying mitigation and digital boundary management.
- Procedural updates for case management and reporting.
- WOSM policy updates

Public Disclosure and Resource Accessibility (MNC 20)

To ensure transparency and fulfill WOSM Education Criteria, all SfH educational materials, reporting procedures, and awareness resources shall be made publicly available. These materials will be disseminated to all local Scout groups, parents, and external partners to ensure stakeholders are informed of their right to a safe environment.

6. Reporting Procedures and Case Management

Concerns regarding safeguarding breaches shall be managed through a rigorous, transparent workflow aligned with the WOSM Complaints Policy (MNC 13).

1. Submission: Reports must be submitted in writing to the dedicated WBSC safeguarding email address (contact@worldbuddhistscout.org).
2. Subcommittee Formation: Upon receipt, the Executive Secretary shall form a three-person subcommittee (drawn from the Ethics or SfH Committee) to investigate the complaint. Members must confirm the complete absence of conflicts of interest.
3. Complaint Documentation: Within ten working days of formation, the subcommittee will complete a formal complaint document detailing the alleged breaches, times, and locations.
4. Review and Response: The complainant has a window of 14 to 30 days to review and accept the pertinent information before the document is issued to the respondent.
5. Adjudication and Referral: The WBSC will assess the risk and refer the matter to the member's respective NSO for formal adjudication and background check review.
6. Appeals Process: Either party may appeal a decision by providing written notice within seven working days of receiving the WBSC notice. Appeals are heard by a new, independent subcommittee.

Vexatious Complaints

The WBSC reserves the right to dismiss complaints identified as "Vexatious," defined as:

- Persisting in a complaint after the proper procedure has been exhausted.
- Repeatedly refusing to accept documented, factual evidence.
- Continuous focus on trivial matters out of proportion to their significance.
- Complaints designed to disrupt, annoy, or harass another individual.

Principles of Case Management

- Confidentiality: Information is restricted to relevant parties in compliance with global data protection standards.
- Fair Hearing: All parties maintain the right to present their views; the process is designed to prevent manipulation of outcomes.

- Duty to Report: If criminal activity is suspected, the WBSC will advise the complainant to report to local authorities and will report directly if evidence is substantiated by legal counsel.

7. Policy Review and Governance

- Annual Review Cycle: This policy is subject to an annual review by the WBSC Safe from Harm team to ensure continued alignment with WOSM standards and national legal frameworks.
- Governance Oversight (MNC 4): The WBSC Executive Body is responsible for the appointment and oversight of the Safe from Harm Coordinator and team. All updates must be formally approved by the Executive Body.
- Triennium Commitment: The WBSC reaffirms its commitment to the 2024–2027 Triennium goals, ensuring safeguarding remains an absolute priority in all Buddhist Scouting activities.