

**Media Statement Regarding AIS Press Conference – Updated on August 6, 2019
For Attribution to the Boy Scouts of America**

We care deeply about all victims of abuse and sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting. We believe victims, we support them, we pay for counseling by a provider of their choice, and we encourage them to come forward.

Upon receipt of this information from the group of plaintiff's attorneys, we immediately investigated the limited information provided and our efforts have already resulted in approximately 120 reports to the lead law enforcement agency in each state with an accusation of abuse. We have also contacted local law enforcement for all the cases in which enough information was provided to identify the correct agency. As a result of providing these notifications, some law enforcement agencies informed the BSA that they need additional information in order to investigate the claims. Because the BSA is not privy to any additional details at this time, the law enforcement agencies have called Abused in Scouting for more information. On July 11, the BSA informed AIS that a few law enforcement agencies had reported to the organization that they had been unable to contact AIS.

We are continuing to manually search paper records at the local level to see if we can identify more information about the additional alleged perpetrators identified in the plaintiff's attorneys list. As we identify sufficient information, we will immediately notify law enforcement.

Barriers to Abuse

In the 1920s, the BSA created a system to bar individuals from Scouting that should not work with youth. That system continues to this day and has been continually updated and enhanced over time. While no system is perfect, the Volunteer Screening Database (VSD) has been and remains a valuable tool in preventing known or suspected abusers from joining or reentering our organization.

The BSA has taken significant steps over many years to ensure that we respond aggressively and effectively to reports of sexual abuse. We recognize, however, that there were instances in our organization's history when cases were not addressed or handled in a manner consistent with our commitment to protect Scouts, the values of our organization, and the procedures we have in place today.

Today, the Volunteer Screening Database – a tool the Centers for Disease Control recommends for all youth-serving organizations – serves as one of BSA's many strong barriers to abuse, which also include:

- Ongoing mandatory youth protection education for all volunteers, parents, and Scouts;
- A leader selection process that includes criminal background checks and other screening efforts;
- A leadership policy which requires that at least two youth protection trained adults will be present with youth at all times; and prohibits one-on-one situations where adults would have any interactions alone with children – either in person, online, or via text;
- Prompt mandatory reporting to law enforcement of any allegation or suspicion of abuse; and,
- A 24/7 Scouts First Helpline ([1-844-726-8871](tel:1-844-726-8871)) and email contact address (scouts1st@scouting.org) to report any suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior.

We believe victims and remove individuals based on only allegations of inappropriate behavior. We steadfastly believe that one incident of abuse is one too many and we are continually improving all of our policies to prevent abuse. This is precisely why we fully support and advocate for the creation of a national registry overseen by a governmental entity, similar to the national sex offender registry, of those who are suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child, and thus allowing all youth serving organizations to share and access such information. We call upon Congress and other youth serving organizations to support this initiative.

The BSA also regularly convenes leaders from other youth-serving organizations, as well as experts in the youth protection field. Sharing of information is one of the key focus areas of those discussions. Experts note that among the general US population, one in six men have experienced sexual abuse or assault at some point in their lives. This is an unacceptable public health and safety problem that must be addressed, and we seek to be part of the solution along with all other youth-serving organizations.