



## **Trout Unlimited** **Sexual Abuse Policy** *March 1, 2009*

### I) Introduction

Trout Unlimited (TU) strives to create a safe environment for youth, employees, and volunteers so that youth can grow, learn, and have fun while actively participating in sponsored events. Part of creating a safe environment is making sure that youth are not harmed in any way while participating in organization-sponsored activities. One risk in any organization working directly with youth is child sexual abuse.

It is vital that TU create a culture where child sexual abuse is discussed, addressed, and prevented.

### II) Components of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

#### 1) Screening and Selecting Volunteers

- TU's goal is to select the best possible people for volunteer positions, and to screen out individuals who have sexually abused youth or are at risk to abuse. Screening through a background check provider for child sexual abuse prevention is currently integrated into the general screening and selection process for volunteers staying overnight for activities such as Conservation Schools.

#### 2) Guidelines on Interactions Between Individuals

- To ensure the safety of youth in their interactions with volunteers and with each other guidelines on interactions between individuals should be determined. For example, activities that promote one-on-one activities between adults and youth may need different interaction guidelines than programs built around group activities.
- Find a balance between encouraging positive and appropriate interactions and discouraging inappropriate and harmful interactions. Adopt strategies with this balance in mind to ensure that youth benefit from your program without risk of sexual abuse or harm.
- Appropriate, positive interactions among youth and between volunteers and youth are essential in supporting positive youth development, making youth feel valued, and providing the caring connections that serve as protective factors for youth. Conversely, inappropriate or harmful interactions put youth at risk for adverse physical and emotional outcomes.
- Limit one-on-one interactions whenever possible by having at least two adults present at all times with youth.
- Examples of Appropriate/Inappropriate/Harmful Behavior
  - *Verbal communication*
    - Appropriate:
      - Praise
      - Positive reinforcement for good work/behavior
    - Inappropriate/harmful:
      - Sexually provocative or degrading comments
      - Risqué jokes

- *Physical behavior*

- Appropriate:

- Pats on the back or shoulder

- Inappropriate/harmful:

- Patting the buttocks
    - Intimate/romantic/sexual contact
    - Corporal punishment
    - Showing pornography or involving youth in pornographic activities

- Physical evidence of abuse

- Difficulty in walking
    - Torn, stained or bloody underwear
    - Pain or itching in genital area
    - Bruising or bleeding of the external genitalia
    - Sexually transmitted diseases

- Behavioral signs of abuse

- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
    - Wearing lots of clothing, especially in bed
    - Fear of being touched
    - Nightmares or fear of night
    - Apprehension when sex is brought up

- TU Conservation Schools and other youth activities need to address interactions among youth in addition to monitoring interactions between volunteers and youth. Many strategies that focus on the interactions between employees/volunteers and youth can be tailored to address interactions among youth.
  - Address all situations where unsupervised youth can sexually or physically abuse other youth. For example, if you have a policy that prevents adults from being present in locker rooms or shower areas because of the risk of child sexual abuse, this may result in a situation where unsupervised youth can sexually or physically abuse other youth. A potential solution is adopting a policy that requires more than one adult to be present in some manner at all times.
  - Develop policies to deal with bullying and sexual abuse so that positive interactions can be promoted while acknowledging that some interactions are inappropriate or harmful.

### 3) Monitoring Behavior

- The goal of monitoring is to prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors and to reinforce appropriate behaviors. Monitoring involves observing interactions and reacting appropriately. This includes both volunteer – youth, and youth – youth interactions.
- Monitor inappropriate or harmful behaviors – refer to Section 2 above for examples of inappropriate or harmful behaviors. Understand the boundaries that have been established and identify when someone has crossed the line. Potential inappropriate behaviors include showing favoritism, giving gifts, and looking for time alone with youth.

- Monitor potential risk situations – Acknowledge that some situations pose more risk for inappropriate behavior than others. For example, interactions during an overnight trip are harder to monitor than interactions on a one-day field trip.
- Monitor appropriate behaviors – Acknowledge, praise, and encourage appropriate behaviors. Reward and reinforce positive interactions between volunteers and youth. For example, awards for team competition in an event such as casting.

#### 4) Ensuring Safe Environments

- The goal for safe environments is to protect youth from situations in which they are at increased risk for sexual abuse. Environmental strategies will vary depending on the specific event. Strategies will be different for events with specific physical sites (e.g., fly tying, casting, other group instruction), events with multiple sites (e.g., tree plantings, stream monitoring), and events with leased or undefined space (e.g., Youth Conservation Schools). The risk of the environment should be considered regardless of an event's physical space, and strategies should be used to ensure youth and volunteers can be monitored.
- Critical strategies for ensuring a safe environment:
  - Visibility – Choosing activity areas or spaces that are open and visible to multiple people can create an environment where individuals at risk for sexually abusive behaviors do not feel comfortable abusing.
  - Privacy when toileting, showering, changing clothes – Policies and procedures should be developed for reducing risk that consider not just the risk of adult sexual abuse, but also the risk of inappropriate or harmful contact among youth.
  - Access control – Develop policies and procedures for admitting and releasing youth from activities so their whereabouts are always known. Have policies and procedures for monitoring which people outside of your group are allowed in and under what circumstances.
  - Off-site activity guidelines – Decide and communicate when and where TU volunteers are responsible for the youth being served. This is particularly important in a multi-organization setting such as field trips. Develop environmental policies for field trips and other off-site activities, such as how to handle off-site bathroom breaks and use of public transportation.

#### 5) Responding to Inappropriate Behavior, Breaches in Policy, and Allegations and Suspicions of Child Sexual Abuse

- Respond quickly and appropriately to (1) inappropriate or harmful behavior, (2) infractions of child sexual abuse prevention policies, and (3) evidence or allegations of child sexual abuse. The ultimate aim of child sexual abuse prevention efforts is to prevent child sexual abuse from ever occurring, however, it needs to be communicated clearly what volunteers should do if policies are violated or if sexual abuse occurs.
- It is not the role of a volunteer to evaluate or investigate an allegation or suspicion. Let child protective services, law enforcement, and child advocacy centers investigate allegations or suspicions. Trying to do an investigation yourself can harm the youth or the legal investigative process.
- As discussed previously, it is often difficult to find the balance between being vigilant and protective of youth and being so hyper-vigilant that the positive parts of programs (e.g., relationships between adults and youth) are lost. In responding, the need for this balance involves recognizing the tension between over-reacting

and under-reacting. By developing policies before any inappropriate behavior occurs, you can set reasonable expectations for responding.

- For example, if a youth tells a sexually risqué joke, you may inform a volunteer leader or staff member; provide the youth with guidance, redirection, and instruction; and/or file an incident report. However, if a youth or volunteer forces sexual contact with a youth, this violation should always be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- Tailor strategies and policies to each type of child sexual abuse. For example, identify to whom reports are made. In most states, child protective services is responsible for caretaker abuse, and law enforcement is responsible for abuse by all other individuals. Responsibility can vary by state, so consult experts such as those in your nearest child advocacy center, your state sexual violence coalition, or your local rape crisis center in order to incorporate state guidelines into your specific policies.
- Do not speak with anyone from the media, or release any names and incident associated information under any circumstances. Refer any questions to TU Senior Staff.

#### 6) Training about Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

- To provide volunteers with the information and skills to help them prevent and respond to child sexual abuse, this basic training should be reviewed and acknowledged by all volunteers participating in overnight activities.
- Volunteers should know that TU youth programs exist in order to provide a healthy and safe environment where youth can thrive. The very things that we do may be protective against child sexual abuse. For example, close, caring, and connected relationships between youth and volunteers can be extremely beneficial for youth development and can help youth feel supported and loved. This may protect youth from child sexual abuse. Because of the nature of the interconnections in these relationships, however, they can also put youth at risk of being sexually abused by volunteers or other youth.

### **General Policy and Guidelines**

Trout Unlimited prohibits and does not tolerate sexual abuse by volunteers or staff in any organization related activity.

Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual contact of criminal nature or interaction for gratification between an adult and a youth, or between underage youth. Sexual abuse includes sexual molestation, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or sexual injury. Any incidents of sexual abuse reasonably believed to have occurred will be reportable to appropriate law enforcement agencies and regulatory agencies.

If you are aware of or suspect sexual abuse taking place, you must immediately report it to the volunteer leader of the activity, who will then be required to report immediately to a member of TU Senior Staff. In a case of imminent danger to the child, the volunteer leader should report the suspected abuse to the local or state Child Abuse Agency. If that information is not easily available, contact the Child Help's National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-422-4453. Appropriate family members should be notified of alleged instances of sexual abuse.

Trout Unlimited prohibits retaliation made against any employee, volunteer or board member who reports a good faith complaint of sexual abuse or who participates in any related investigation. Making false accusations of sexual abuse in bad faith can have serious consequences for those who are wrongly accused. TU prohibits making false and/or malicious sexual abuse allegations, as well as providing false information during an investigation. Anyone who violates this rule is subject to all actions available by law.

TU will take all allegations of sexual abuse seriously and will promptly and thoroughly investigate whether sexual abuse has taken place. TU will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or other regulatory agencies. TU will make every reasonable effort to keep the matters involved in the allegations as confidential as possible while still allowing for a prompt and thorough investigation.

**Statement of Acknowledging Receipt and Understanding of Sexual Abuse Policy**

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the sexual abuse policy and/or have had it explained to me. I understand that TU will not tolerate any form of sexual abuse. I understand how to report incidents of sexual abuse as set forth in this policy, including retaliating against any volunteer or staff member exercising his or her rights under the policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_