Building a Culture of Involvement

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of engaging families in sustaining the unit.

2. Understand how effective parental and family engagement contributes to the stability of unit activities and unit administration.

3. Explore strategies for engaging unit parents to promote involvement and unit support to build a culture of involvement.

Presentation

- How do units engage the parents of their unit, and record the responses. Indicate similar responses with a tic mark. After receiving responses from all of the units, ask how effective each method has been in promoting parental involvement.

- Ask how different methods of communication contribute to reaching out and connecting with unit families.

  — List the methods of communication used by units, including email, social media, and traditional methods such as phone calling.

  — Ask how many of the units represented have an annual parent meeting or parent information session. What methods are used by the units to hold a parent meeting?

- Ask how many of the unit's present request parental support for activities or meetings.

  — Do unit leaders request "general help," or do they ask parents to perform specific responsibilities?

  — Ask what type of responses the units have received, and highlight the importance of asking for specific, well-defined jobs to be completed.

- Ask how many of the units provide families with a published calendar of unit activities.

  — If they do, has the calendar helped families plan their involvement in activities and outings?

  — What type of input or feedback have they received regarding the calendars?

- Ask how many of the units invite parents to attend unit training, training conducted at the district level, and online training.

  — Ask unit leaders if their unit parents are aware of the availability of online training.

  — Have invitations been extended to parents as a means of engaging them in unit activities and planning?

  — Conduct a "review and wrap-up" of the list of successful ideas and strategies shared by the participants.

  — Discuss the key concepts of creating a culture of Involvement at the unit level.

  — Review multiple methods of communication, publishing a unit calendar, having clearly defined unit level "jobs" for parents to fulfill, and inviting parents to attend training presented by the council or district training teams as well as online training options.

  — Be sure to highlight "best practices" for reaching out and engaging parents in unit meetings, activities, and outings. Make plans to compile and publish a list of these practices to build a culture of involvement, and follow through on this plan.

— Be prepared to conduct a follow-up segment at a future roundtable, possibly as part of the program leader breakout session, to revisit and review the "best practices" list.

But let's not forget our Youth Protection requirements as you communicate with your scout youth.

Youth Protection and texting with Scouts

Posted on June 15, 2016 by Bryan Wendell in Ask the Expert, Technology, Youth Protection

Waiting on that Scout to email or call you back? You could be waiting a long time.

These days, three-fourths of teens have smartphones, and their favoriteway to communicate is by texting, according to the latest research.

If you're a Scout leader, that isn't news to you.

But how does the Youth Protection rule prohibiting one-on-one contact apply to texting? That was the question on the mind of a Scouter who emailed me recently and asked to remain anonymous. The Scouter writes:

Emailing Scouts/Venturers and following Youth Protection guidelines of two-deep leadership and no one-on-one contact is easy. I simply copy their parents on the email and ask the Scout to reply all.

But most of my Scouts don't email. They want to text. How do you recommend I communicate with them by text? Some phones allow you to send group messages, while others don't. What are your thoughts?

First, let's review the official Youth Protection guideline on the matter:
Two-deep leadership and no one-on-one contact between adults and youth members includes digital communication. Leaders may not have one-on-one private online communications or engage one-on-one in other digital activities (games, social media, etc.) with youth members. Leaders should copy a parent and another leader in digital and online communication, ensuring no one-on-one contact exists in text, social media, or other forms of online or digital communication.

Next, let's hear from Michael V. Johnson, the BSA's Youth Protection director, who offers even more great insight:

Thank you for the question. Together with our Internet safety partner — the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and NetSmartz — the Youth Protection Task Force is familiar with the trend of youth moving away from emails and towards text as a primary form of communication.

We want to thank you for your concern and commitment to following Scouting policies found in Scouting's Barriers to Abuse.

We suggest three things:
1. Hold a parents' meeting and discuss communications with Scouts. Many parents (beyond the policy violation) do not want one-on-one communications with their children. A unit's mutual agreement on Scout communication is important. It will demonstrate your Youth Protection concern and leadership on your part. Inform all of the policy and seek a reasonable, agreed-upon solution.
2. For planning and organization purposes, we do usually recommend a more-formal communication tool, rather than an unregulated third-party app. The Scoutbook web app, for instance, offers calendaring, planning and electronic two-deep leadership communication.
3. If you're having trouble with group messaging on your phone, check your provider's website or take your phone to your provider. The phone may have functionality you don't know about. You may be able to copy parents or other leaders — which is required for all digital communications.