



THE NATIONAL SOCIETY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Guidelines and Procedures

NSSAR acknowledges a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of youth in its charge and is committed to developing and adhering to Youth Protection best practices. Staff and Volunteers must place the welfare and safety interests of youth in their care above all else. All youth and mentors deserve a safe, positive, and enjoyable experience while participating in our programs and events.

This policy must be implemented and carried out in a manner consistent with federal, state, and local law.

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Overview and Policy Statement:

NSSAR acknowledges a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of youth in its charge and is committed to developing and adhering to Youth Protection best practices. Compatriots, Staff, and Volunteers must place the welfare and safety interests of youth in their care above all else. All youth and mentors deserve a safe, positive, and enjoyable experience while participating in our programs and events. This policy must be implemented and carried out in a manner consistent with federal, state, and local law.

NSSAR acknowledges that all youth are vulnerable to victimization, and we must be vigilant to ensure everyone's welfare while participating in or observing NSSAR programs and events. As part of our policy compatriots, staff, and volunteers will:

- Prioritize the safety and well-being of all youth in their charge.
- Understand their responsibility in recognizing, identifying, and responding to abuse, neglect and other concerns relating to youth.
- Deliver written reports of abuse to the Executive Director within 24 hours of the alleged incident.
- Take action immediately upon witnessing or notification.
- Ensure confidentiality as much as possible for those who report abuse.
- Ensure that confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all concerns are kept.
- Prevent contact with known unsuitable individuals. Unsuitability can include but is not limited to individuals on the sex offender registry, anyone under the influence of illicit substances or alcohol, etc. The Executive Director or the NSSAR designee shall have the authority to make the final determination of what constitutes suitability.
- Ensure reasonable and appropriate abuse barriers are being utilized.

The National Society Sons of the American Revolution has a long history of providing service to youth. Each year young people participate in our SAR Youth Programs including the Knight Essay, Rumbaugh Orations, Americanism Poster, Adams Middle School Brochure, JROTC Outstanding Cadet Contests and the Eagle Scout Scholarship. Many chapters host History Day events, sponsor Living History festivals, work closely with the Children of the American Revolution, or have compatriots who visit schools or youth groups for Traveling Trunk/Patriot Chest presentations or as Color Guardsmen.

Unfortunately, no organization or program is invulnerable to abuse or crises. They can and do occur in even the most seemingly positive settings. Predators often seek teaching, coaching, or other positions that give them access to children and teenagers. Others who are committed to working with youth sometimes find it hard to believe that some adults will abuse the trust placed in them, so they may not notice the signs.

The NSSAR's Youth Protection Policy:

“The SAR strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in SAR sponsored activities. To the best of their ability, Compatriots and staff, their spouses and partners, and other event volunteers must safeguard the children and young people with whom they come into contact and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.”

Our Approach:

Education: Every State and Chapter is expected to inform and educate its members on these guidelines, best practices and required actions for individuals who become aware of youth in potentially harmful situations. This education must occur annually, including providing a copy of these guidelines to each Compatriot.

Chaperone: All youth contestants participating in National, State and Chapter sponsored events should have a chaperone. A chaperone is defined as a family member, faculty member, parent, legal guardian, or person who is in loco parentis, twenty-one (21) years of age or older, who has been approved by the family, school or agency and registered with the school or agency to accompany the youth members at the specific event. All Compatriots and staff members participating directly in any single-day or overnight programs, or event should have a clear criminal history background check and must have completed NSSAR annual youth protection training.

Criminal history background checks: NSSAR suggests States do a criminal history background check on new applicants and for any compatriot serving as a Youth Program Committee Chairman. Persons without a clear criminal history background check should not serve as a Youth Program Chair. Approved background checks shall be valid for no more than three years. States should acquire a new criminal history background check upon their initial appointment to the position. After receipt of an individual's application and verification of all required elements, States will review the information and decide, in its sole and absolute discretion, whether the individual is accepted to become a Youth Program Committee Chair. (See Appendix B)

Reporting: If a Compatriot observes troubling behavior involving a youth at an SAR event or becomes aware of a situation that is illegal or potentially unsafe for a young person at an SAR event, he must immediately contact the appropriate personnel at the event, as well as provide notification to law enforcement personnel if required. All local, state, provisional and federal laws regarding reporting must be followed. If the Compatriot becomes aware of the troubling behavior after the event, he must contact leaders of the event and provide notification to law enforcement personnel as necessary. (See Appendix C)

Personal information: All documents bearing personal information of any youth participating in an SAR event, including registration forms, should be treated as confidential. Processes that protect this information must be created, including minimizing the number of people who have access to any such documents. The documents shall be maintained a minimum of three years or longer, as may be required by applicable state/provincial laws and regulations. After the maintenance period has expired, the documents shall be destroyed in a way that maintains confidentiality, such as shredding. The disposal

and destruction of all confidential information, including digital documents, shall conform to applicable state/provincial laws and regulations.

Youth and social media: For any social networking site that involves requesting a connection (such as inviting someone to be a friend on Facebook), adults should never initiate such connections with youth. If a youth requests such a connection from a Compatriot, the Compatriot should use his best judgment in responding. Adults should treat their interaction with youth on social networking sites as though the interaction were occurring in public, in front of other adults and young people. In other words, if it would not be appropriate to say something to a young person in public, it should not be said as a comment on a social networking site either. Compatriots should refrain from interactions with a youth, that can be seen as excessive (such as constantly “liking” or commenting on a person’s posts on Facebook). Prior to posting any media online, such as photographs, obtain permission from the individual or the parents of minors who appear in that media; it could be illegal to do otherwise.

Behavioral or health issues: Compatriots could be seen by a young person as adults to trust with personal and/or sensitive information. Compatriots should refrain from counseling youth and should instead find, or assist the young person in finding, appropriate expert assistance.

Conflicts with other rules: Whenever these guidelines conflict with local school policies or rules, or local state/provincial, or national laws or regulations, the highest applicable standards for conduct shall prevail.

Youth Protection Awareness and Youth Protection Training

All Compatriots should be aware of the need for Youth Protection Programs and the NSSAR’s YP Policies. Youth Protection Training (YPT) is a critical component of the best practices for organizations who work with young people and for the SAR it is mandatory for ***all*** Compatriots in Leadership Positions, Professional Staff and any Compatriots who work with young people through our Education Outreach Programs, Youth Contests, or with the Children of the American Revolution. This would include but is not limited to Compatriots on the following committees: Americanism, American History Teacher Award, Eagle Scout, Knight Essay, ROTC/JROTC, Rumbaugh and Engagements, Education, CAR Liaison and the Council of State Presidents.

To decrease the risk of abuse to any child within our sphere of responsibility, the SAR created the following four phased approach to raising awareness of the issues across the organization and training those Compatriots directly involved with young people in the execution of our SAR Missions. In the event there are situations outside the expected scenarios, the volunteer is to consult their Society Chancellor or the National Society’s Director of Education for guidance.

*For our purposes, youth/child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years of age. The term **volunteer** includes any SAR compatriot or SAR staff personnel. All adults working with youth under the age of 18 at any SAR sponsored event are required to read/understand, agree to, and abide by these policies.*

Phase One – Application Screening

Initial membership application and induction into the National Society. All new applicants should be run through the local Sex-Offender Data Base before their applications are forwarded to the National Society. Included in this local screening can be a statement to be signed by applicants that includes the following language: I (verify that I) have not been convicted in any jurisdiction of molestation or sexual or other crime against children. Or they can complete a form similar to the one attached (Appendix B Volunteer Application and Background Check Authorization). These are suggested actions to be taken at the Chapter or State level prior to submitting a packet to National and are not required by National.

Phase Two – Youth Protection Training

Completion of the NSSAR Online Youth Protection Training (<https://www.sar.org/courses/youth-protection-training/>) within 3 months of assumption, appointment, or election to a leadership position at the National, Society or Chapter level, assignment as a National Committee Chair or Vice Chair, or assignment to a designated youth serving committee.

NSSAR online YPT must be retaken, and records updated every three years. All Compatriots should have an annual review presentation of the guidelines and potential signs of abuse and neglect, along with reporting procedures NLT than the annual congress. The Compatriot is expected to maintain a copy of their individual completion certificate. Chapter and State Education Directors should maintain a current roster of their members who have completed YPT and their expiration dates.

Phase Three – Youth Protection Awareness Maintenance

Conversations, reference checks, background checks and refresher training may be conducted on an optional basis. Special attention may be given to educating those who are new and not established, or for older long-duration members of the Society. Consideration can also be given at the state level for the State Education Directors and youth program chairs to check the local or national sex offender database for any compatriots serving in these areas.

Phase Four – General Youth Protection Guidelines

This section includes guidelines for the actual time spent with youth. It is recognized that not every possible scenario can be included in this section; however, it is intended to provide specific expectations and guidelines for actual time spent with youth. If a unique situation occurs, the volunteer is to immediately contact the persons in charge of the event in question and their state society chancellor.

General Rules: All activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least two screened adults. When feasible each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window. (Windows in doors tend to reduce the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks.)

Two Adult Rule: It is our expectation that a **minimum of two unrelated adult volunteers** will be in attendance at all times with youth during our programs and activities. A one-on-one situation is never acceptable, unless it is in a room with others present and in clear view. The Two Adult Rule also applies to Communications.

Communications: One-on-one contact between adult leaders and youth members is prohibited both inside and outside of SAR.

- In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.
- Private online communications (texting, phone calls, email, chat, IM, Zoom, etc.) must include another registered SAR adult or parent.
- Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Snapchat, et.) must include another registered leader or parent.

Doors Open: In the rare event a volunteer is left alone, he/she must keep the door open and ensure there is no block to a line of sight. If the doors are unable to be left open for security purposes, then no fewer than three children should be present, and the adult should ensure adequate distance is maintained of **a minimum of three feet** when presenting or interacting with the youth present.

Bathrooms: In the event a volunteer takes children to utilize the bathroom facilities, he/she must take multiple children at the same time and first, check the bathrooms to ensure they are empty. The volunteers must remain outside the bathroom door or hold the bathroom door propped with his/her back if supervision must be maintained. At no time should a volunteer assist a child in the bathroom unless an emergency arises. If a child needs assistance, the volunteer should contact school personnel. If assistance is given in an emergency, the volunteer must immediately contact a superior and document the situation, along with reporting it to the campus/parent.

Behavior: In the event a child's behavior becomes inappropriate, the volunteer must handle with verbal prompts and gentle reminders. A child may be asked to move to another seat, be reminded of making positive choices and similar. At no time is a volunteer to place hands on a child. School personnel or other care takers are to be contacted in the event a child's behavior increases inappropriately.

Injury: In the event a child has an injury during a presentation or event, the volunteer may assist if it is in the view of others and the child is not separated or managed alone. It is the preference to contact and allow school personnel or other caretakers to manage the situation, in the place of volunteers. (See Appendix D)

Publication of Photographs and Information

Youth Information Privacy and Consent: Written permission from a parent or legal guardian must be obtained prior to publication in any format (both public and member-only accessible) of photographs, videos and personally identifying information. Consent is obtained through use of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution Youth Awards and Contests, Parent/Guardian Permission Form and Release (See Appendix C).

Social Media: Members should refrain from actions that appear excessive, such as constantly "liking" or commenting on an individual's posts.

Reporting

In the event a volunteer has a suspicion a child is being abused and/or neglected, he/she must adhere to the reporting procedures for the state the incident occurs in, per the Youth Protection Training. This should also be reported to their Chapter President, Society President, and the NSSAR Inspector General and Executive Director at the earliest opportunity.

In the event parents or school personnel have a concern regarding a volunteer, the following procedures are in place:

Document the concern, including all available details (e.g., time, date, persons involved, date/time/person/method receiving the concern).

Investigate the situation, which includes but is not limited to:

A review of the schedule of volunteer activity to determine who was present.

Remove any volunteers involved in the alleged situation from continued presence with youth.

Interview the volunteers involved or present and obtain written statements (e.g., signed/dated).

Ask for access to security camera files. Interview other youth present and obtain written statements when able (e.g., signed/dated).

Action may be taken, based upon the investigation findings, up to and including reporting to the proper local authorities, and removal from SAR.

The policy and procedures shall be widely promoted and made mandatory for everyone involved in NSSAR sponsored youth activities. Failures to comply could result in exclusion from organizational activities. This policy shall be reviewed on an as needed basis.