

# *Adult Leader Handbook*

**Scout Troop 497  
Boy Scouts of America  
St. Joseph's Church  
Texas, Maryland**

"...It may not matter what kind of house I lived in, or what my checking account was. All that mattered was that I was important in the life of a boy..."

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## CONGRATULATIONS !

You are privileged to serve as an adult leader in our scout troop. The experiences and fellowship you are about to share will become pleasant memories for years to come.

The boys in our scout troop are very lucky to have worked with some of the finest adults ever to have donated their time to youth. The founder of scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, once said that every adult should consider a boy as a camera who takes snapshots of the adult leaders with whom he works.

It is very important, therefore, that you take on the responsibilities of being an adult leader seriously. Your living up to these responsibilities will affect the lives of many young men and it is imperative that such impact be positive. In order to help you get accustomed to the methods of scouting and our troop, this booklet provides guidelines which we ask our troop leaders to follow.

Not all adults are asked to serve in a capacity which involves them directly with our scouts. Only those with the personal character and who embrace the high ideals of scouting are privileged to serve. Welcome aboard!

## SCOUT OATH

On my honor, I will do my best  
To do my duty, to God and my Country  
To obey the Scout Law  
To help other people at all times  
To keep myself physically strong,  
mentally awake, and morally straight

## SCOUT LAW

A Scout is	Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent.
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These are the two major guidelines of our leaders. They are the same guidelines to which we ask our boys to pledge.

## SETTING THE EXAMPLE

The most important thing an adult can do is set a good example for the boys. This example can be as simple as following the rules of the troop or as complex as skillfully handling an emergency situation.

The scouts expect and look for good examples from those adults who serve as leaders. Providing a good example is the best way to earn their respect. Everything you do comes under the scrutiny of the scouts. There is nothing they enjoy more than catching an adult breaking the rules or setting a poor example.

No one likes the leadership style of "Do as I say, not as I do." Nor do we advocate that style in our troop. We ask all of our adults to strive to follow the exact same rules as were established for the scouts. No better example can be set.

No one leadership skill can do more for you as an adult leader than this single skill: setting a good example. It is difficult and a challenge. However, we ask our boys to meet challenges every day. That is the essence of our program.

## IT'S A "BOY-RUN" TROOP

One of the hardest things for adult leaders to do is watch the boys conduct an activity while knowing it could be done better. Remember, if boys already knew how to do everything perfectly, they wouldn't need scouting. Our boys have elected their leaders at all levels. These leaders are expected to lead. There is no greater peer pressure than when scouts feel their leaders are letting them down.

There may be times when you might see the adults in the troop standing by and observing. At such times, perhaps you think they should be involved. Herein, however, lies our method: the boys run this troop, with our guidance, and they need to have the freedom to conduct its business their way. You will see great successes and will witness great failures. This is scouting.

Avoid the temptation to correct the boys and take over an activity. Stand back, let it fail, and it will become a learning experience. The boys will respect your patience and your confidence in their abilities.

The only instance when adult leaders should and do step into a situation is one which involves the health or safety of the boys. Every adult in our troop is responsible for the safety of the boys.

## UNIFORMS

We ask those adult leaders who serve as assistant scoutmasters to wear the Boy Scout uniform. The boys are encouraged to wear it properly, and we adults should do the same.

Adults have the option of wearing the campaign hat or the baseball cap. The rest of the uniform is the same as that of the boys. The uniform guidelines are set forth in the *Scout Handbook*, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, and other scout literature. Stick to the guidelines. Unfortunately, in some scout troops you will see scout leaders with patches and awards all over their uniforms -- many worn improperly. Again, guidelines provide details on correct uniform items and placement of each.

A properly worn uniform, with proper patches, is a fine example for the boys. We expect and accept no less from them.

## SMOKING

The troop understands the need of some adults with respect to smoking. It also understands the right of the scouts and other adults not to be subjected to secondary smoke. Finally, we also have a concern regarding the example that is set by adults who smoke.

The troop policy request that adults who have the need to smoke do so at **all** times out of the sight of the scouts. Smoking is not permitted in the meeting hall and should be kept to a minimum at all scout gatherings.

In seeking out designated "adult areas" of the troop meeting hall and camping trips, a smoker does not fulfill the requirement of being out of the sight of the scouts. Scouts are allowed to enter and are encouraged to feel welcome in those areas. Please use discretion if you feel the need to smoke at a scouting event.

## **TO HAVE A SON OR... NOT TO HAVE A SON**

You may hear it said upon your arrival at a scout event that you no longer have a son in the troop. This statement reflects a policy we have had in our troop almost since the day the troop was started. It is in effect for your benefit and that of your son.

When your son is in the troop, he is among many other boys who may or may not have their fathers attending (the majority do not). You may find it strange that when another adult corrects or gives your son direction it is received differently (and in most cases more readily) than when you, his father, do the correcting.

We encourage you to observe your son in his element and among his friends. You may find much more about him than you thought you knew. But try not to get involved. If you think your son needs correcting, ask another adult to perform the honors. Your son is here to have fun, and so are you. Enjoy the time together and take some brief time off from a parent's responsibility.

It works.

## **BADGES AND RANKS**

The Boy Scout program encourages young men to work for personal achievement. It is all too easy to "help" these young men along even when they do not wish to be helped along. Boys will advance and earn achievement at varying paces. Each boy is different. If a boy asks for help, give it to him.

The requirements set down for the boys by the scouting program are written explicitly. Some may seem too difficult for an 11-year-old but probably aren't for a 14-year-old. Avoid the temptation to give advancement away. A boy who has had to work hard for something will value his achievement far more than if an award has simply been "given" to him. He may fail many times before he succeeds. But when he does succeed, success becomes that much sweeter.

If you have the opportunity to work with a boy on a badge or other advancement, **STICK TO THE REQUIREMENTS: no more, no less.** He will gain greater respect for you as a leader and for himself as an individual.

## **DRINKING**

Under no circumstances are alcoholic beverages of any type permitted at any activity sponsored by Boy Scout Troop 497. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Availability of alcohol at family events and parent events sponsored by the Parents Club will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## **LANGUAGE AND ACTIONS**

Please use every effort to maintain an atmosphere of high moral conduct. Foul language and actions which may be common in other places are **not acceptable** behavior at times and in places where they can be observed by the scouts. Today's society provides enough negative influences in our boys' lives without additional unfortunate examples by adult leaders. Please use language and actions which follow the guidelines set down by the Scout Oath and Law.

## **A SCOUT IS REVERENT**

The Boy Scout program has a strong basis in religion and believes that it is a vital part of the proper upbringing of young men. Boy Scout Troop 497 is sponsored by St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church but membership is by no means restricted to boys of the Catholic faith. Many of our scouts are and have been from Protestant, Jewish, Hindu, and other denominations.

We support the Boy Scouts of America's religious policy and requirement for membership in our troop. Please read this policy stated in the application. If you feel that you cannot support this statement, we thank you for your interest but will not be able to accept your application for the job of an adult leader.

## **VOLUNTEER STATEMENT & LEADER APPLICATIONS**

The sponsoring organization of our troop requires that all adults serving as leaders in any of the parish organizations complete a volunteer statement form. This form is completed concurrently with the adult leader application for the Boy Scouts of America. Both documents contain detailed questions regarding an adult's fitness to work with youth. Please read all this material carefully and make sure all questions are completed.

## **PROBATION PERIOD**

Each adult leader in the troop is required to go through a six-month probationary period as a leader. This period is used for the protection of the boys in the troop and should be a time during which the adult and the scouts get used to working with each other. Should the troop committee decide it is in the best interest of the boys or the adult that he or she not continue as an adult leader, the adult will be so informed during this time.

In addition, upon completion of the application, we require all adults who work directly with the scouts to undergo a background investigation by the state and federal authorities. The cost of this investigation is paid for by the troop.

Serving as an adult leader is a privilege. Should an adult leader's actions be deemed unacceptable, the troop committee and sponsoring organization have the right and responsibility to ask that adult to discontinue his or her service as an adult leader. This may occur at any time during or subsequent to the probationary period.

## **CAMPING GUIDELINES**

### ***SLEEPING***

Guidelines set forth by the Boy Scouts of America prohibit scouts from sleeping with adults except during father-and-son trips. No boy may sleep alone on a camping trip. These guidelines are in place for the protection of the boys as well as the adult leaders.

Unless a medical situation prevents you from doing so, we ask that you sleep in the same accommodations as those supplied to the boys. If our format is tent camping, sleep in a tent. If it is cabin camping, cots may be provided. Please do not plan on sleeping in vehicles or campers unless your doing so is warranted by a medical situation.

## *LEAVING CAMP*

Once we arrive at camp, we ask that no adult leave during the weekend unless he is asked to travel elsewhere for specific supplies or equipment. If you need specific types of food or equipment for personal needs, please let our Quartermaster know so that the appropriate items can be acquired in advance.

## *TRANSPORTING SCOUTS*

When transporting scouts on a scouting sponsored activity, you have the responsibility for their well-being when they are in your vehicle. **Drivers must observe all federal, state, and local driving regulations for the safety of the scouts and the troop.** For safety reasons, the Boy Scouts of America discourages travel in a caravan style of driving. Traveling in small groups of two or three cars is preferred. If the boys in your vehicle are misbehaving, feel free to take the necessary action required to restore the vehicle to a safe atmosphere.

Each boy you transport must have his own seat belt. Please transport only as many boys as your have seat belts to accommodate. Additionally, it is preferred that dad's who drive not transport their own boy to and from trips. It's a great way to get to know the other boys in the troop and for other adults to get to know your son.

## *STOVES AND LANTERNS*

Boy Scout Troop 497 uses liquid-fueled and propane fueled stoves and lanterns on many of its outings. This equipment is recommended for ecological purposes. The equipment may only be lit by adults trained in its operation. If you are unsure of the proper method of lighting a stove or lantern, please seek help. The scouts will request that an adult light their stove when they are ready.

## *FLAMES IN TENTS*

Under no circumstances should any type of flame be introduced inside any tent. Tents are flame resistant but not inflammable. Heaters, hand warmers, candles, lanterns, etc., are **forbidden** inside a tent.

## *FOOD IN TENTS*

Please do not take food or drinks inside tents. Crumbs and odors can invite unwelcome and sometimes dangerous visitors during the night. Please keep an eye out for the boys breaking the rule.

## ***DRINKS***

There are drinks that the troop allows on camping trips and drinks that we do not. Sodas and other beverages which are canned or bottled are generally prohibited as part of the troop meals. Please follow the same guidelines as set down for the boys. Don't bring a personal supply of sodas or other drinks. Remember, an example is the most powerful leadership tool you can have.

## ***EQUIPMENT IN TENTS***

Please do not take any backpacks, cots, or other metal or wood-framed devices into the troop tents. The floors are nylon and may rip or tear. The boys are not allowed to have such equipment in their tents either.

## **ADDITIONAL TRAINING**

The Boy Scouts of America provides additional training courses for the scout program. These courses are available to any adult who wishes to gain additional knowledge in the scout program. Training exist at basic to advanced levels.

Our troop encourages our leaders to attend additional training. The training is optional but can be very helpful and rewarding. It is the policy of the troop that all training fees for adults are paid for by the troop

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Again, thank you for your time and commitment to our scouts. The adults and leaders of Troop 497 are happy you have decided to join us. We hope these few guidelines will help you become an active contributing leader.

Once again,

Welcome Aboard!