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Boy Scouts of America Response

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(IRVING, TX—October 18, 2012)—The Boy Scouts of America issued the following response to a news conference hosted by two Portland-based attorneys regarding the attorneys' release of the BSA's ineligible volunteer files from 1965 to 1985.

Scouting's Response to Files Released by Plaintiff's Attorneys

"Nothing is more important than the safety of our Scouts. There have been instances where people misused their positions in Scouting to abuse children, and in certain cases, our response to these incidents and our efforts to protect youth were plainly insufficient, inappropriate, or wrong. Where those involved in Scouting failed to protect, or worse, inflicted harm on children, we extend our deepest and sincere apologies to victims and their families."

"We have always cooperated fully with any requests from law enforcement and welcome any additional examination by authorities of Scouting policies, training, and files to learn from our longstanding Youth Protection efforts. In fact, next month in Atlanta, the BSA is hosting a Youth Protection Symposium in cooperation with other youth-serving organizations where nationally recognized third-party experts will discuss and share best practices."

Points of Clarification

Confidential Files

These files are not—and have never been—secret. They have been reported extensively in the media going back to the *New York Times* in 1935, included in books on Scouting throughout our history, and were the subject of numerous news articles and a book in the 1990s. Further, the files are known to many of the millions of volunteers in Scouting, because joining the organization requires they be cross-checked against this list. While not secret, the files are confidential because experts agree that confidentiality is a key component of effective government and private-sector reporting programs.

Training Scouts and Adult Leaders

The BSA has been training on Youth Protection for decades and today has the most comprehensive program on this issue for youth and adults among all youth-serving organizations. Our education and training programs are specifically designed to create an environment of awareness and to teach Scouts and adults to recognize and prevent abuse. Every parent is informed of the BSA's Youth Protection policies at the time of application and must review Youth Protection materials with their child as a requirement of membership. Scouts are taught to recognize, resist, and report abuse—in and out of Scouting—through a series of videos and other written materials. This training is a requirement for rank advancement. All adult leaders must complete Youth Protection training every two years in order to maintain their membership.

Transparency of the Organization

Our policies have always required Scouting to adhere to state laws in reporting abuse. Today, it is mandatory that any good-faith suspicion of abuse is immediately reported to law enforcement. In the files released today, police were involved in nearly two-thirds (63 percent) and a majority of these files (58 percent) included information known to the public.

Failure to Acknowledge

The BSA's acknowledgement of this issue dates to the 1920s when the Boy Scouts of America began keeping a list of individuals—the ineligible volunteer files—who did not meet its standards. In the decades since, the BSA has continuously enhanced our policies and procedures to ensure we are in line with and, where possible, ahead of society's knowledge of abuse and best practices for prevention.

Counseling of Scouts

Since the late 1980s, when the BSA rolled out a strongly structured Youth Protection program, the BSA has worked, and continues to work, with local councils in making it known to victims and their families that counseling is available when they have been a victim of abuse in Scouting.

Additional Information and Interviews

Additional media information on Scouting's Youth Protection policies is available at:
www.bsayouthprotection.org.

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